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PERIODICALS DEPARTMENT

EDITORIAL

SMALL 'D' DEMOCRACY

Pondering the reasons for their election defeats in 1972 and 1980—the worst Democratic debacles of the century—party politicians came up with an unexpected villain: an excess of democracy. The reforms in delegate selection and primary procedures promulgated by the McGovern Commission in 1970 radically reduced the power of Democratic bosses and office-holders, and extended the clout of minorities, voting blocs and single-issue groups. Popular participation led to tough positions and serious struggles—not the kinds of things American politicians like to see infiltrate their soft machines.

Pressed by Walter Mondale and Edward Kennedy to restrict participation in the nominating process, the party reformed the reforms in 1982. Now, party big shots are guaranteed convention delegate slots (about 14 percent of the total seats), and states are allowed to design their Presidential primaries so that the winner takes all in each Congressional district.

It's hard to say with certainty how those new rules (and some similar changes) will affect any one of the eight announced candidates. But Jesse Jackson suspects that rules aimed at consolidating power in the hands of the same "white males" who have always held it are inimical to his cause. He has challenged the re-reforms, asked for a rollback to the democratic days and thus set himself in opposition to the power structure of the party.

He is not likely to get his way. It's probably too late for states to reformulate their primaries (the eight winner-take-all states have the most delegates at stake). But Jackson's challenge is useful even if it fails for now, because it underscores the slippage in party democratization that the Democrats have allowed, and it shows that another round of reform is required.

'THE FILE'
Blair Clark

MANY GREYHOUNDS?
Stanley Aronowitz

SOLAR POWER ECLIPSE
Richard Munson

ALICE WALKER
Patricia Vigderman

'RADICAL AMERICA'
Maurice Isserman

DASHIELL HAMMETT
Constance Casey

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

THE WEST'S NEXT MOVE IN THE GULF

FRED HALLIDAY

The violence in Lebanon, the invasion of Grenada and the missile shipments to Europe have distracted the West's attention from a more dangerous international flash point—the Persian Gulf. The Iran-Iraq war, which has dragged on for more than three years and has cost nearly a half-million lives, could escalate dramatically before the year is out and suck in the United States and its Middle East allies.

So far, the war has been inconclusive and the fighting confined. No neighboring state has been drawn in, and no oil shock has occurred, as in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. Although both the United States and the Soviet Union are concerned about the war, neither has had the influence or the incentive to stop it.

But in October, Iraq acquired five French-built Super-Etendard jets, capable of launching Exocet missiles against the main Iranian oil-shipping facilities, on Kharg Island. Such an attack would halt Iran's export of oil and provoke Teheran to take countermeasures aimed at obstructing the flow of all gulf oil to the West: either a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz or direct strikes on oil fields in Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing nations.

The delivery of the French jets, however, was only the most visible of several developments that have considerably altered the strategic situation in the gulf region in recent months. The Baghdad regime has begun to show signs of serious strain. With but one-third the population of Iran and with most of its oil exports cut off, Iraq cannot afford a protracted conflict. War-weariness is growing among the people, and the

(*Continued on Page 633*)

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LETTERS.

ONE GOOD SLUR . . .

New York City

I'm always partial to a fine slur or innuendo and thus must admire Deborah Davis's suggestion ["Letters," *The Nation*, Nov. 26] that personal considerations inflected a *Voice* piece of mine that she now professes was damaging to her. Actually I think she's mad at me for not having taken up her cause over the years, despite her hopes that I would. (Sneaky slur.) I didn't because I consider her views to be exceedingly absurd. (Manly slur.) Anyway, in case anyone wants to read the alarmingly objective little article I wrote in the November 5, 1979, *Voice* about *New York*'s killing of an excerpt from her book, I have furnished Victor Navasky with some copies of it and dispatched another copy to Davis in the hope that it will invigorate her memory. I hope that even this fleeting contact with reality does not unduly disturb her. (Cumbersome slur.)

Alexander Cockburn

'THAT'S INCREDIBLE'

Encino, Calif.

In his November 26 letter, Richard Cohen charges that Deborah Davis "wrote a book that reviewers found sloppy and incredulous."

Sloppier than "incredulous"? That's incredible!

David Cohen

'THE FILM WE MADE'

Dayton, Ohio

We have never responded to a review of one of our films before, but Joshua B. Freeman's piece on *Seeing Red: Stories of American Communists*, in the October 29 *Nation*, strikes us as so far off base that it warrants a letter.

Rather than consider the movie we actually produced (and thus give thought to why we made the choices we did) Freeman complains we did not make the movie he wanted to see. Freeman apparently wanted a film that would answer the many questions of a small number of leftists already familiar with Communist Party history. Judging by the questions he criticizes us for ignoring in *Seeing Red*, it would seem he wanted not a film at all but a book. Certainly he was looking for a detailed history of the party. It is an interesting idea, except for one thing: we neither attempted nor pretended to document that history. That's just not what our film is about.

We decided early on that any attempt to recount the fifty-year history of the Communist Party in a 100-minute film just wouldn't work. It would be bad history *and* bad filmmaking. What we did attempt was to tell the story of the lives of American Communists. The film shows how the choices they made—to be involved in a political movement, to commit themselves as dedicated activists, to stick with it through good times and bad, to face the bitter truths of Stalinism and the rigidity of their own party—affected both their lives and American history. More than anything else, the film attempts to put an American audience unfamiliar with radical life into the shoes of a Communist. That seemed an ambitious enough task to us.

In the course of the film, we both praise and criticize the Communists. It is not true, as Freeman states, that most of the people in *Seeing Red* seem at peace with the past. The film clearly shows that after Khrushchev's 1956 speech detailing Stalin's purges, the party lost 80 percent of its members. We follow our subjects' lives as they tell of their reactions, including bouts with alcoholism, isolation and disillusionment. But we don't leave the story there. We look at how those people have come to terms with communism and, for the most part, have continued their activism in the 1980s. They are obviously proud of how they have led their lives. This is not some autumnal glow as Freeman cynically puts it. It is a reflection of reality. Those people cannot erase the mistakes of the past, as they make perfectly clear in the film, but they have grown and changed with time, and in a way that obviously satisfies them.

In making *Seeing Red*, our goal was to use the history of American Communists to say some things that are important today. We wanted to give the lie to the idea that a life of commitment will lead to an old age of embitterment and regret. The characters in *Seeing Red* state the case eloquently.

Throughout our twelve years as filmmakers we have created political films that communicate far beyond the movement. Like many radicals in the media, we feel it is crucial to break out of the left ghetto, to stop talking to the already committed or the already knowledgeable. Freeman accuses us of lacking faith in our audience. On the contrary, even to attempt a film that deals with Communists' lives challenges American viewers substantially. It asks them to throw off many years of perceived truths and look at the world anew, never an easy thing to do.

The review ends with a lament that the Reagan Administration's reluctance to fund similar films makes it unlikely that a film about Communists more to Freeman's liking will ever be made. It is not for lack of government funding that films like ours have not been made before. It is the anti-communist climate of our country. Given the rapidly reheating cold war, we hope *Seeing Red* can play an important role in changing that climate, so that a number of other political films can and will be made.

Julia Reichert
James Klein

A MOVIE, NOT A BOOK

Chicago

I want to take issue with Joshua B. Freeman's evaluation of the excellent movie *Seeing Red*. I am appalled at his shortsightedness. Though he can appreciate the powerful irony of the beginning of the film, he missed the main point, the human point, of the film.

Seeing Red is not a history of the Communist Party, U.S.A. It is an attempt to introduce contemporary Americans to Americans of earlier generations who happened to be Communists. It's about the people who sparked campaigns for social programs the like of which had not been seen in the history of the radical movement in this country.

When Julia and Jim interviewed me for *Union Maids*, I told them about my experiences in the party. They felt that to deal with that subject would take another film. Similarly, there are aspects of *Seeing Red* that could require another movie; I can easily add to Freeman's list of omissions. But really, when a person tells us his or her exciting experiences, don't we always feel that we want to hear more? How much history can one include in a 100-minute movie? Seems to me Freeman wants a book, not a movie!

Freeman misses the point of the film if he overlooks the *people* in the movie, who have lived most of their lives caring about the world. Little by little throughout their lives the dogma dropped away and the sense of human responsibility grew stronger. In spite of their militancy, they have become more tender, warm and wise. And despite leaving the party, those folk remain activists by and large. Doesn't Freeman see their passion and zest for life in the interviews?

After nearly 400 interviews and six years of work (the filmmakers are still thousands of dollars in debt for their efforts), a movie is produced that is an outstanding portrait of people who devoted their lives to some of the greatest social struggles of the century.

One final note. If Freeman is right that another film on this subject is not likely to be made soon, he should be exalting *Seeing Red* as one of the too few vehicles for teaching and learning about the people who were in the Communist Party of that period.

Stella Nowicki

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double-spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space. Our policy is to publish as many letters as space permits, but inevitably a backlog develops, so please bear with us.

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EDITORIALS.

Adrift in Lebanon

The American military force in Lebanon represents a presence without a policy, a symbol without a strategy and a mission without a meaning. It is creating a problem without a solution. The best we can expect in the short run are fire fights and air strikes. The worst may come over the long haul: a war of attrition between U.S. marines and Moslems of several nationalities. And in the distance looms the terminal possibility of a major Soviet-American confrontation. And all that for what?

The Administration's objectives in Lebanon have never been clearly stated. Obviously, the peacekeeping purpose has been forgotten, if it was ever serious. President Reagan has said from time to time that the marines (and the other European military detachments) are supposed to support the Christian Phalangist regime of Amin Gemayel against his numerous adversaries, domestic and foreign: the Druse, the Shiites, the Palestinians, the Lebanese left, the Syrians and so forth. Secretary of State Shultz holds that the goal is to frighten the Syrians (and their Soviet sponsors) into withdrawal, thus opening a way to the elimination of all foreign forces in Lebanon and the reunification of the country.

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But neither Reagan's nor Shultz's half-baked projection is realistic. The clumsy and confused effort of American air, land and sea forces has succeeded only in undermining the Gemayel regime and stiffening the Syrian resolve to remain in the extensive territory it occupies. Israel's rapid integration of *its* territory south of the Litani River—now called "the North Bank"—has made permanent partition of Lebanon all but inevitable. As part of that balkanization process, the United States will be stuck with its own enclave around the Beirut airport. It is a position that is at once provocative and vulnerable.

The mess in Lebanon, as far as the Americans are concerned, has developed because of two enormous failures of intellect and insight in Reagan's Washington. The first is the apparent inability of the Administration to see beyond military solutions when faced with political difficulties. Tensions in Lebanon? Send in the Marines. Attacks on the marines? Shell the Druse. Stymied negotiations? Bomb the Syrians. The obsession with the military fix is evident from U.S. actions in the Caribbean and Central America as well as the Middle East, and it now dominates the Administration's approach to world affairs.

The second failure is a corollary to the first: the specific incomprehension the Administration brings to the political history of the Lebanese crisis. The sniping and the shelling and the bombing this year did not just happen out of a Levantine blue sky. It is not Phase 19 or Phase 77 of the Soviet master plan to conquer the globe. There was, after all, a massive Israeli invasion last year. There is an authentic civil war, along confessional, religious and class lines, raging in Lebanon. There is a regionwide struggle among Moslem states—and the Jewish one is part of it too—for power and survival. And there is the intractable issue of Palestinian national aspirations.

In the heat of the battle that he has provoked, President Reagan has forgotten or disregarded all that has gone before. That is a stupid and dangerous mistake, and unless he can be convinced—by his critics and opponents on the home front—to change course at once, we will all suffer for the error.

Justice Backlog

On November 29 the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, declined to hear Robert Sullivan's appeal and sent him to the electric chair. With rather tortuous logic, the Court denied it was "rushing to judgment": Sullivan's case had been in the courts for ten years, after all. Gratuitously attacking the defense attorneys' efforts on behalf of their client, Burger stated, "The arguments . . . advanced by the dissenters that capital punishment is cruel and unusual is dwarfed by the cruelty of ten years on death row inflicted upon this guilty defendant by lawyers seeking to turn the administration of justice into a sporting contest."

The Chief Justice ignored the very real doubts about Sullivan's guilt that had been raised by his attorneys and by religious leaders. Any further complaints about lawyers for death-row clients playing games should be stilled by the stay of execution granted to Charles Knapp, sentenced to die in Arizona's gas chamber on December 7. Knapp's lawyers and others, including Steven Brill, editor and publisher of *The American Lawyer* (who wrote a powerful account of the case for the magazine's December issue), believe that Knapp did not commit the crime of which he was convicted—burning his children to death—and the lawyers succeeded in winning a stay. Their habeas corpus petition raised legal questions on admission of testimony and other matters that are important in their own right. But in his article, Brill shows that evidence that has recently come to light points to Knapp's innocence. Again we see the folly of cutting off the appeals process simply because it has gone on too long.

On the same day the Court denied Sullivan's plea, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, in St. Louis, heard arguments on the habeas corpus appeal of James Dean Walker, whose case has been in the courts since he was convicted of killing an Arkansas policeman in 1964 [see Singer, "Who's Afraid of Habeas Corpus?" *The Nation*, October 22]. It was the third time the circuit court judges had heard his appeal, a highly unusual action, taken apparently for the benefit of the two judges appointed after Walker made his first appeal, in 1981. His lawyers speculate that some of the judges want to deny Walker a third trial because of pressure from the Supreme Court to speed up habeas corpus appeals.

But Walker's case is a solid one: relevant evidence was withheld from his first two trials, false testimony was given, and as some judges at the recent hearing agreed, the presiding judge in the earlier trials had been prejudiced. (He intended "to burn the S.O.B.," he had said.) The State of Arkansas's argument for denying habeas corpus was based on the testimony contained in the trial record and on the assistant attorney general's assertion that he personally believes Walker is guilty. It is uncertain when the judges will issue their decision, but they should grant Walker the third trial he deserves just as they granted his earlier plea for a transfer out of the Arkansas prison system, where he had received abominable treatment. Justice has been delayed far too long.

AMY SINGER

Amy Singer, a former Nation *intern, is a freelance writer living in New York City.*

'The File'

What right does an American who was labeled a "dangerous national security risk" thirty-seven years ago by the government he sought to serve have to confront his accusing informers, refute their lies and purge the official records of slanderous and damaging nonsense?

None. And in *The File*, a fascinating, horrifying book published last month by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Penn Kimball tells how he came to that bleak conclusion after a

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six-year struggle to find out who had said what about him and how the national security apparatus had used "the package of lies, accusations and secret proceedings that had haunted [his] life."

The dirty work done in the dark by the State Department, the F.B.I., the C.I.A. and their craven informers would have been outrageous whatever Kimball's politics were, but the fact is he never strayed further to the left than the liberal mainstream of the Democratic Party. True, this Eagle Scout, Princeton graduate, Rhodes scholar and one-time reporter for David Lawrence's *United States News* had worked for a year and a half on the newspaper *PM*, and as a member of its Newspaper Guild unit, had supported its position in favor of a United Automobile Workers strike against a West Coast airplane manufacturer. But his stubbornly independent nature kept him from aligning himself with either the "communist" or "conservative" factions of the guild.

The smear began right there. In the sleazy words of the late James Wechsler, himself a former Young Communist Leaguer who had become a leader of the "conservatives" on *PM*, "If someone could authoritatively clear up how far to the Left he [Kimball] went in his thinking, I would recommend him for a position of trust." We know Wechsler uttered such damaging ambiguities only because the blackout pen skipped that line among the thousands Kimball laboriously pried from the guardians of our ideological purity via the creaky mechanism of the Freedom of Information Act.

Of course most of the Feds' informers (or "interviewees," as they are delicately named) are well hidden by the censor's brush, which preserved their privacy from the proper anger, contempt and perhaps retribution of their victims. Twenty-six years after the death of smear master Joe McCarthy, the government is still busily, self-righteously covering up the identities of those poisonous gossipmongers and auxiliary cops. How could a modern government function without its snoopers and squealers?

Privacy is all, according to this doctrine, and in its shadows the stab in the back is safely administered. In the heyday of informing, we even find Arthur Schlesinger Jr. writing to his colleagues at Americans for Democratic Action that Kimball was "a smart and cool party-liner, at least." That on the basis of one meeting at which Kimball was present—at *The New Republic* during the brief period that Henry Wallace was editor. The gem from Schlesinger is not part of Kimball's file; it was found by a friend of his in the papers of Joseph Alsop at the Library of Congress (tax-deduction schemes can have odd side effects).

The whole dirty business began in 1945 after Kimball, fresh out of the Marines, was asked to take the Foreign Service examination. He passed and in 1946 was told he'd be sent to Saigon as vice consul. By that time he was on the staff of *Time* magazine, one of several subversive organs that employed him, and he turned down the appointment, but his name remained in the files of the security probers and in a matter of months was labeled a security risk.

The file kept swelling even though Kimball never reapplied for a government job. In the Kennedy years someone thought of hiring this experienced journalist, who had served as a political aide to Senator William Benton and Governor Chester Bowles. That set off a new flurry among the securityites. More agencies got in the act, chewing the old cud of lies. No offer materialized. There were mysterious delays in granting passports. A chance for a Fulbright Fellowship withered.

During all that time Kimball was hardly starving or failing to prosper professionally. He is not one of those whose lives or livelihoods were ruined by official America's Red paranoia. He spent several years at *The New York Times Magazine*, working for editor Lester Markel. You might think that would have been an establishment credential to the filers. Not at all. Some idiot informer at *The Times* contributed the consummate asininity that Markel was the "Number one pro-Communist on *The New York Times*"; it was tossed in with the garbage of Kimball's file. The thing just kept growing.

Twenty-five years ago, mysteriously blocked from work in the public sector and having shifted from job to important job in journalism, Kimball joined the faculty of the Columbia School of Journalism, where he remains. When Congress at last decided that Americans are entitled to peek through the curtain concealing what their government is doing for and to them, Kimball applied for his file under the Freedom of Information Act, determined to find out what had happened to his aborted public career, and why.

Bureaucratic procedures are not ordinarily considered fascinating, but Kimball has made them so. His account of the lies, evasions, delays, buck-passing and obfuscation committed and practiced by the Federal "intelligence" agencies in slowly disgorging his record is often hilarious despite its depressing moral. And what he was able to extract from our watchdogs over six years would be substantially unobtainable now that Reagan and Company have had three years to throw sand into the works of the F.O.I.A.

The villain of *The File* is that great abstraction the state, in its national security guise. Innocent Kimball, profoundly conservative and patriotic, simply can't accept the fact that all this was done to him by the country he was proud of and was eager to serve. Worse than his (concealed) exclusion by the State Department on security grounds is the realization that the dreadful process went on behind his back, allowing him no chance to face his faceless denigrators.

Worst of all is the very existence of the file. Full of outrageous slanders and malicious fantasies, it lies in bulging cabinets and computer disks, unreachable, uncorrectable, unactionable. The epitaph stamped on it by the government of the United States is "Penn T. Kimball, dangerous national security risk." How many dossiers like it are still waiting to be discovered by other Penn Kimballs?

BLAIR CLARK

Blair Clark is a former editor of The Nation.

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SOVIETICUS.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

Let 1983 be remembered as the year our cold warriors led us, in the name of national security, to the greatest insecurity in the history of American-Soviet relations. The current deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe is an unnecessary and dangerous act. Its immediate consequence will be the counterdeployment of Soviet missiles much closer to the United States. Its enduring consequence will be to increase the risk of nuclear war by intensifying mistrust on both sides, undermining fragile safeguards against the use of such weapons and reducing the time in which crucial decisions can be made from hours to minutes.

The only way back from this nuclear Rubicon is to recognize and repudiate the myopic thinking that has led us there. All our underlying national conflicts with the Soviet Union are political in nature, but as a nation we have stopped thinking politically about any of them. Mainstream American thinking about the Soviet Union has become utterly militarized. It focuses only on weapons problems, reasons only in "strategic" doctrines and thus finds only military solutions.

Americans like to say that politics is the resolution of conflict through bargaining and compromise. In international affairs, it is called political diplomacy. But the United States no longer has any diplomatic policies toward the Soviet Union, only strategic ones. Indeed, whatever coherent policy we do have is shaped not by State Department diplomats but by the Secretary of Defense and the President's so-called national security adviser—officials whose first premise is military.

Still worse, the folly is bipartisan. President Reagan's explicit faith in military solutions, rather than political-diplomatic ones, is the culmination of militarized thinking that flourished under President Carter and remains pervasive in the Democratic Party. None of the Democratic frontrunners for the 1984 Presidential nomination have proposed a truly political solution to any American-Soviet conflict. Huddled around "centrist" positions, their disagreements with the Reagan Administration and among themselves are quarrels over strategic doctrine and the Pentagon's budget. The obsessive counting of warheads has blinded even ardent opponents of the arms race to the lesson of the 1970s, now reaffirmed by the breakdown of the Geneva talks: no arms control agreement is possible or stable without broader political-diplomatic agreements.

The abolition of American diplomacy toward the Soviet Union is reflected in the fifty-year history of its guiding political idea—détente, or the gradual reduction of conflicts through negotiations instead of through military superiority. In 1933, President Roosevelt instituted the first détente policy by establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. In 1953, President Eisenhower began diplomatic talks that ended American-Soviet confrontations in Austria and Korea. In 1963, President Kennedy called for renewed American-Soviet diplomacy. In 1973, President Nixon's détente policy was still in force. But in 1983, even the word "détente" is profane in American politics, anathema to leaders of both parties who now accept, or fear, the old slander that it is "appeasement."

Détente, however, is the only rational political policy in American-Soviet relations. Consider the alternatives. Hot war will invite mutual destruction because reliable boundaries no longer exist between the use of conventional weapons and a desperate resort to tactical nuclear ones. Cold war has also become irrational, if only because it has entered a historical stage of missile brinkmanship, as we are now witnessing.

All hope for the future, therefore, requires the rehabilitation of American diplomacy and détente. Bipartisan cold warriors rule out that hope, insisting, on the one hand, that the Soviet Union alone "betrayed" détente in the 1970s and, on the other hand, that all diplomatic possibilities have been exhausted. Both contentions are false. The United States helped sabotage détente in the 1970s by violating its political promises to the Soviet Union, including those of most-favored-nation status in trade and credits, ratification of SALT II and a neutralist policy toward China.

Nor have diplomatic approaches to American-Soviet conflicts today been exhausted. Most haven't even been tried. In the Middle East, for example, we have ousted the Soviet Union from negotiations, even though no political settlement is possible without its participation. We should concede a Soviet negotiating role in return for recognition of Israel by Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization. In the emotional area of Soviet Jewish emigration, our decision to tie it to economic sanctions through the Jackson-Vanik and Stevenson amendments caused the Soviet Union virtually to end that emigration. We should offer to repeal both amendments in return for renewed emigration. In China policy, we have aroused Soviet military anxieties and outraged our former military ally in Taipei by recklessly offering weapons to Beijing. A policy of American friendship but no weapons to either Chinese government might coax a reduction of Soviet forces along the potentially explosive Sino-Soviet border and also placate Taiwan. As for strategic arms control, an American ratification of SALT II and postponement of European missile deployment would bring the Soviet Union back to Geneva, probably with new concessions in hand.

Such political negotiations will never be easy, and some will fail. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the Soviet leadership, faced with serious domestic and foreign problems, is ready for a renewed and comprehensive diplomacy that could include Central America and possibly even Eastern Europe. Moreover, the choice is now stark and fateful: either diplomacy and détente or militarism and missiles. The Soviet government, of course, contributed to the militarization of our present relationship. But it should shame and alarm citizens of democratic America that the main problem today is a failure of American political thinking and leadership, and that as the 1984 primaries approach, no clear remedy is in sight.

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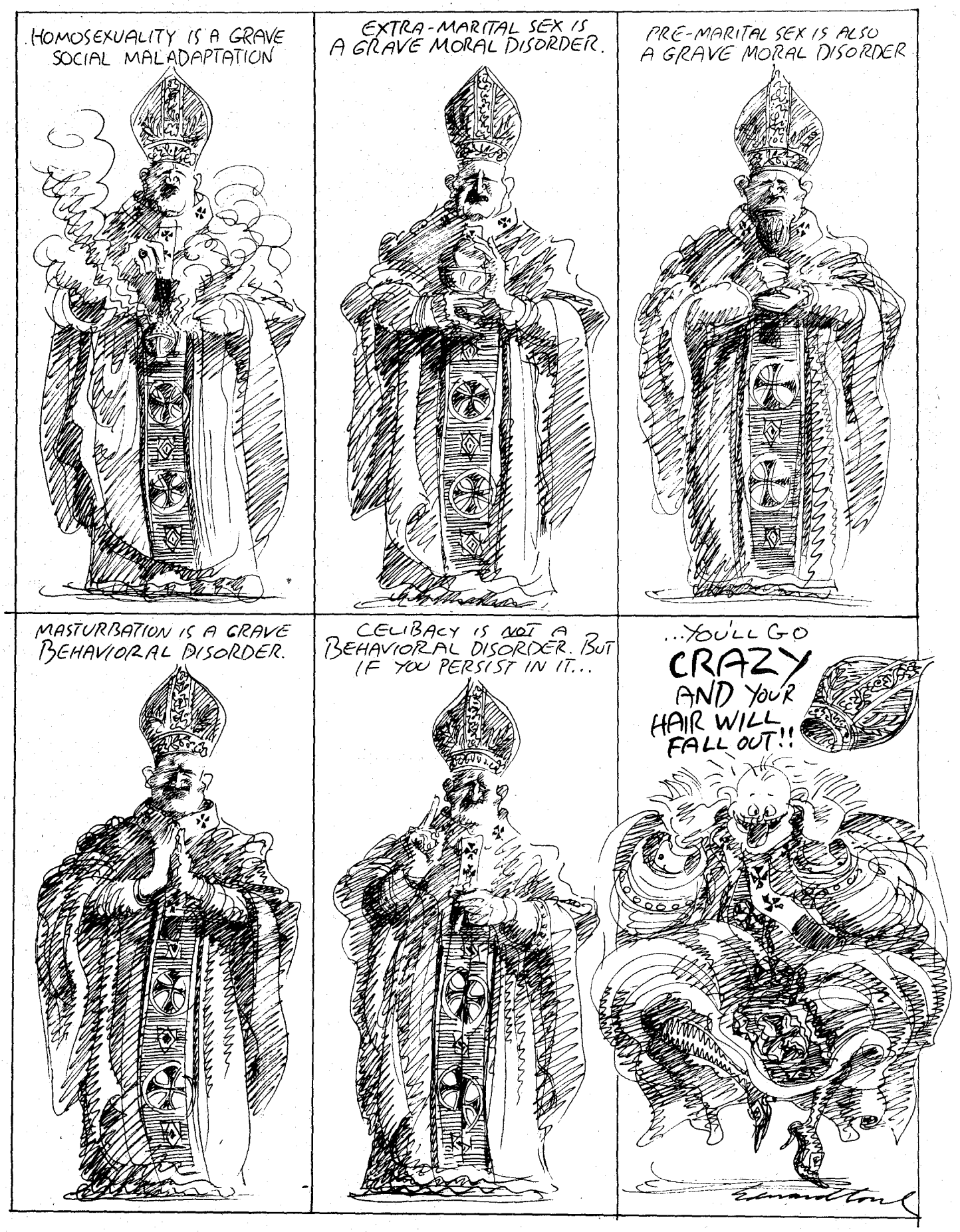
Vatican Issues Sex Guidelines

EDWARD SOREL


HOMOSEXUALITY IS A GRAVE SOCIAL MALADAPTATION
EXTRA-MARITAL SEX IS A GRAVE MORAL DISORDER.
PRE-MARITAL SEX IS ALSO A GRAVE MORAL DISORDER
MASTURBATION IS A GRAVE BEHAVIORAL DISORDER.
CELIBACY IS NOT A BEHAVIORAL DISORDER. BUT IF YOU PERSIST IN IT...
...YOU'LL GO CRAZY AND YOUR HAIR WILL FALL OUT!!

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ARTICLES.

TURMOIL IN TRANSPORT

Two, Three, Many Greyhounds?

STANLEY ARONOWITZ

After two and a half years of steady retreat, the transportation unions have mounted a counter-attack to employer demands for wage and benefit givebacks. On November 3 the Amalgamated Transit Union (A.T.U.), an organization almost as old as the American Federation of Labor, went on strike rather than buckle under to Greyhound Corporation's ultimatum that it relinquish 25 percent of its wages and benefits or face extinction. Three weeks later 96 percent of the union's membership—an unprecedented showing—voted to reject management's revised offer. Although a tentative settlement was announced on December 3 (the membership will vote on it later in the month), the A.T.U. seems to have extracted some future concessions from a previously obdurate management while agreeing to immediate cuts. More important, the union survived—remaining united despite management's threats to fire all the strikers and even close down the company. The transit union's resistance attracted widespread support among the labor movement at a time when union fortunes are at a low ebb.

In recent months, even powerful unions such as the teamsters and the various groups representing airline employees have been unable to win rank-and-file approval for givebacks. The teamsters' leadership was prepared to grant concessions to help combat the devastating effects recession and deregulation have had on employers' profits, but 80 percent of the membership voted to reject its proposal. In the airline industry the labor movement has made contractual accommodations to ease the most endangered carriers, but unions at Continental Airlines were unable to stave off the company's unilateral wage cuts. There, the usually compliant Air Line Pilots Association spearheaded a strike. But because most of its ground employees are not unionized and flight crew scabs have been easy to recruit, management has apparently succeeded in smashing the strike.

In some respects the A.T.U.'s ability to slow Greyhound to a crawl is atypical. Unlike the bulk of airline passengers, who are professionals and business people, most long-distance bus riders are poor and working-class people, whose sympathies are plainly with the drivers. Moreover, bus terminals are usually situated in the center of cities, and the union has been able to draw support from municipal and local transport employees, hospital workers and craft unions whose base remains in the metropolitan cores. On Wednesday evening, November 23, hundreds of thousands of travelers heading home from New York City for Thanksgiving were greeted by shouting Greyhound workers inside the Port Authority bus terminal. On the street, nearly 4,000 trade unionists heard speakers from most of the major unions condemn the company's wage cuts and its use of scabs.

Labor's response to the situation at Greyhound is quite different from that during the air controllers' strike in the summer of 1981, when it put up only token opposition, and during recent struggles in the airlines in which local labor councils did not mobilize in behalf of strikers. Greyhound now faces a national boycott sanctioned by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and other unions. And the A.T.U. is determined not to relinquish all the gains it won in previous contract negotiations.

Of course if the members approve the latest offer, the union will have succeeded only in cutting its losses, at best. Prior to the strike, the union had countered the company's cut demand with an offer to freeze wages and benefits. The company insisted on cuts in line with its reduced profits and dividends during the previous year, even though it had not lost money as had Chrysler, Continental and the long-haul trucking industry, all of which made similar demands on their unions.

What ties the diverse transportation industries together is a far-reaching reform introduced during the Carter Administration—deregulation. In 1978, after years of wrangling, Congress approved legislation providing for phased deregulation of the trucking industry. The bill had been adamantly opposed by the teamsters and the small trucking companies. They saw it as the end of the old "social contract" in transportation, a tripartite (government, business, labor) arrangement which had provided procedures for tacitly setting freight rates to keep pace with wage hikes, and for dealing with other structural issues confronting the industry. Commercial rates had been regulated by the Interstate Commerce Commission on the principle of noncompetition among carriers and among their unions. Long-haul trucking had been treated as a public utility much like railroads and municipally owned bus companies. When unions won economic concessions from the companies, labor would join management in pressing the I.C.C. to pass along the increased costs through rate hikes. The formula worked nicely for thirty years.

Deregulation was introduced when the U.S. economy was reeling from sharpened international competition, inflation and unemployment. Those conditions conspired with deregulation to produce a crisis in long-haul transportation. When the teamsters went to the bargaining table in 1983, they confronted a new situation. The extremely modest increases provided in the 1981 contract had not been enforced; small companies had gone out of business rather than pay them, and larger carriers had simply refused to institute increases as long as freight rates remained depressed. In short,

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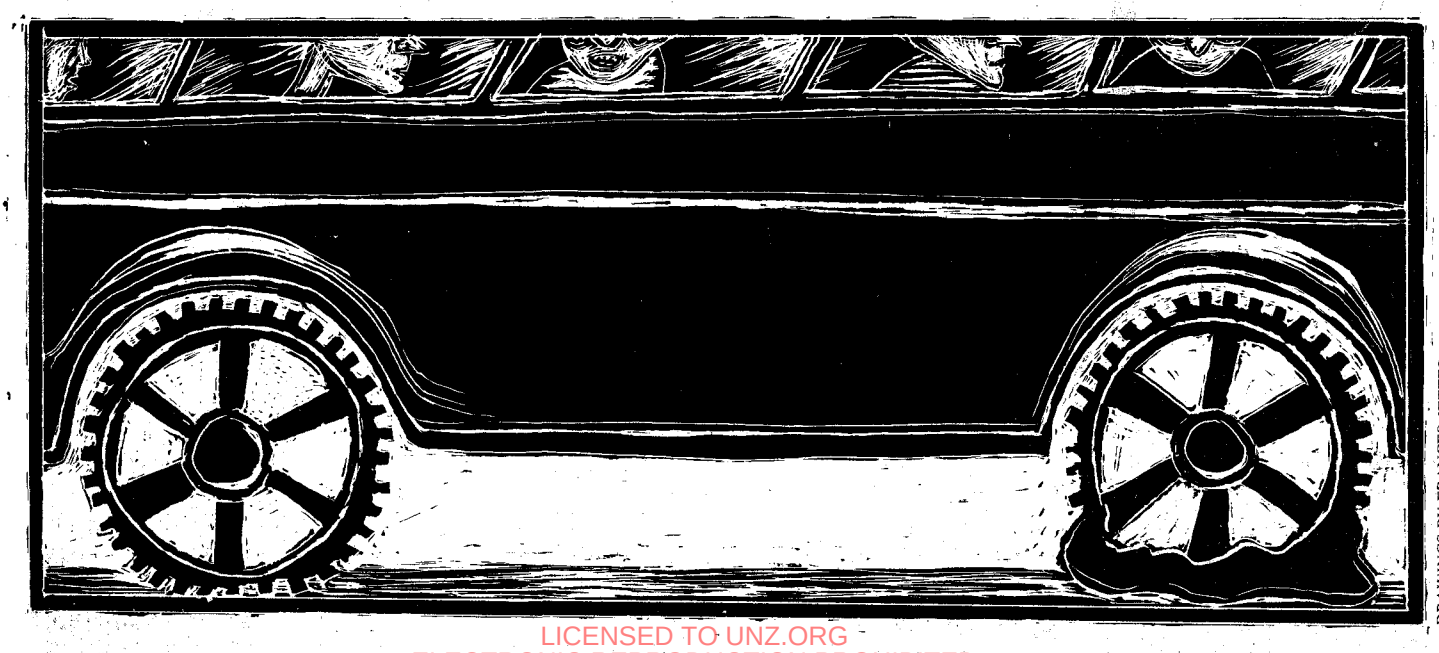
the "free" market had strengthened the hand of a few giant trucking concerns, forced others to the sidelines and produced a growing number of nonunion carriers who claimed they just could not live within the union agreement. Teamster president Jackie Presser recommended substantial concessions, including a wage freeze and some cuts in benefits. The membership rebelled, leaving the collective bargaining process in shambles.

Although it would be an exaggeration to claim that effective trade unionism has disappeared in long-haul trucking, the national bargaining system that the I.C.C., management, and labor leaders like Dave Beck and Jimmy Hoffa built over the past half-century is in ruins. As a result of deregulation the trucking industry now more closely resembles the garment and retail trades than it does the auto and steel industries. Unless a new strategy is devised to maintain union work rules, drivers may find themselves putting in long hours to make a meager living, under the harsh conditions that prevailed in the early 1930s. The vaunted power of their union was founded on a partnership whose time has passed. For tens of thousands of union members who battled for national bargaining on picket lines and for regulation in the halls of Congress, the future is bleak indeed.

Unionism in the airline industry is even more complex. Although for many years collective bargaining was conducted in the secure environment afforded by rate regulation, since 1978 company-by-company rather than industrywide bargaining has been the norm. The unions are also confronted by a large nonunion sector, including Delta Airlines and other carriers operating largely in the South and Southwest. The work forces at other companies (for instance, Continental) are only partially organized. Moreover, in contrast to trucking, which is dominated by a single union, many unions represent airline employees, who are further segregated by the type of work they do and by whether it is done in the air or on the ground. In that sense, the airlines are much like the railroad industry. Flight crews are generally more heavily unionized than ground crews, and there is a fierce rivalry among the unions representing each group. The situation is complicated by the fact that the most highly organized group, the pilots, is also the highest paid and the least union-conscious. Moreover, the unionized sector of the industry faces competition from a growing number of cut-rate carriers, such as People Express and New York Air, which are militantly antiunion.

The crisis in the airlines became apparent in 1980, before Pan American Airways nearly went under. The pilots, flight attendants, engineers and mechanics—some of whom belonged to the transport workers, the teamsters or the machinists unions—formed a labor council to work with the company in an effort to save it. The 1980 contract negotiations were marked not only by *concessions* bargaining but also by *reciprocal* bargaining. In return for accepting a 10 percent pay cut in the first year and deferring an increase in the contract's second year, the workers received $35 million in stock, an agreement that the company will "open the books" to an independent audit prior to the next negotiations and a seat on the board of directors. As head of the teamsters' airline division William Genoese argues, Pan Am could do little about fuel prices, the cost of new airplanes and interest rates, but they could hold down labor costs. Rather than try to break the unions by demanding unilateral concessions, the company chose to make bargaining a two-way street. The Pan Am formula has been followed by Western Airlines and in some respects by Eastern Airlines, both of which faced a similar combination of problems caused by recession and deregulation. In these cases, crisis bargaining generated qualitative gains for workers which would not have been forthcoming in times of economic expansion.

Yet, so far, reciprocal bargaining has been confined to the most troubled carriers, which simply could not have survived without union *and* corporate concessions. American Airlines, United Airlines, USAir and Trans World Airlines have not changed the way they deal with unions; they have chosen the route of layoffs, cutbacks in service and fare increases to compensate for reduced passenger traffic. On most routes, their business is not threatened by bargain car-



DRAWINGS BY FRANCES JETTER

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riers operating with radically reduced costs and lower rates. The fiercest competition is among small companies vying for a share of regional markets. (Although Eastern is a major company, it is primarily an East Coast carrier, facing stiff competition in the Boston-New York-Washington corridor and on the lucrative Florida run.)

For Continental, which is owned by stubbornly antiunion Texas Air Corporation, unionbusting seemed much more efficient, in the short run, than compromise. The hitherto impregnable aristocracy of pilots could be effectively challenged because of the large pool of Vietnam War fliers, who the company knew would work for lower wages. When Continental announced it was cutting salaries by half, the pilots reluctantly struck. Immediately, the company began hiring pilots. Since its ground crews are almost entirely nonunion, Continental could operate at full efficiency within a few months.

The airline unions are further weakened by schisms and internecine rivalries. Recently, a substantial number of flight attendants left the transport workers and formed an independent union because they believed the T.W.U. did not provide leadership in meeting demands on salary and working conditions. The teamsters, machinists and transport workers often compete to represent workers on the ground—mechanics, baggage handlers and sales agents. The pilots are resented by other unions' members, who criticize them for "eating everybody else's lunch" in demanding short hours that drive up labor costs. In recent negotiations at several companies, pilots agreed to increase their flight time by an average of 10 percent, but the grumbling continues.

For the teamsters' Genoese, the solutions to the long-term problems of the industry are labor councils in every company and agreements that follow the Pan Am model. He believes there are too many unions competing in what has become an increasingly antilabor environment. In his view, as long as deregulation encourages selective fare competition designed to drive shaky carriers out of business or to force them to reduce labor costs drastically, the unions are in deep trouble.

Unions that represent workers on the ground are in the most vulnerable position. While Federal Aviation Agency safety regulations bar management from making steep cutbacks in flight crews, there is nothing to protect mechanics, ticket agents and other ground workers from cost-cutting measures, whether those be the introduction of new technology, such as computers, or speedups and stretchouts. Genoese believes that for management, "productivity is the name of the game in order to survive." Consequently, the unions have no choice but to negotiate a bilateral "social contract" with the carriers, in which labor will not only share responsibility for a company's survival by agreeing to raise productivity but will for the first time gain power within the company.

Deregulation challenges the unions to shift from a strategy aimed at militant wage bargaining abetted by sympathetic governmental price fixing to one aimed at winning a larger voice in the management of the various transportation industries. Bill Genoese is among the few union leaders who have a vision of how such a strategy could be forged. His approach—reciprocal bargaining—provides a middle way between the ad hoc concession approach adopted by many unions in the 1980s and the intransigent, no-concessions position that union militants have traditionally advocated.

The strategy of reciprocal bargaining builds on a new communications model of unionism. Workers are fully apprised of the company's position before sitting down at the bargaining table. They have in their hands the needed financial information on which management's concession demands are based. Further, they have "bought into" the company by taking shares of stock in lieu of wages and have gained membership on its board of directors. Finally, this approach follows the traditional industrial strategy of dealing collectively with corporations at the national level, which was fashioned by Jimmy Hoffa, Walter Reuther, teamsters executive vice president Harold Gibbons and others. Thus it avoids interunion rivalries and achieves standardized wages and working conditions throughout an industry and within a firm, in different locations.

Reciprocal bargaining is closer to the German practice of co-determination than it is to the Japanese "participation" program, with its "quality of work life" circles and corporate paternalism. While it departs from the tradition of arm's length bargaining that has been the norm in U.S. labor relations since the 1930s, it does not necessarily surrender union autonomy. In the coming years, the confrontation forced on unions such as the A.T.U., the Air Traffic Controllers and the teamsters will alter labor relations in this country. Unions can no longer rely on the three-part arrangement that regulation afforded, nor can they expect the kind of bail-out that saved Chrysler during the Carter Administration, even if the Democrats win in 1984.

Workers and their unions will have to choose among three alternatives: intransigence, subordination or reciprocity. For now, as the Greyhound strike demonstrates, many corporations seem inclined to overreach their advantage rather than choose some version of reciprocal bargaining when unions are prepared to accept a measure of responsibility. The A.T.U. was forced to strike; it did not seek that path. The Greyhound strike portends a new class war in transportation. In such cases, the traditional union tactics of intransigence may have to be used to impose reciprocity upon anti-union employers.

What is missing from the scenario I have described is a labor-backed political offensive against deregulation. Faced with a hostile Administration, unions have been forced to choose between taking to the picket line and swallowing deep cuts in living standards. Although the prospects for public ownership of the transportation, telephone communication and power industries are slim given the present adverse political climate, the time may be right for a massive union-led educational campaign to win support for such a measure. Meanwhile, finding themselves forced to undertake militant mobilization, the unions may uncover hitherto dormant sources of strength. In any case, unless labor rallies

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behind embattled workers, it may find itself back in the 1920s, when the open shop prevailed and such unions as survived were little more than organizing committees. □

PHOTOVOLTAIC CELL GAME

Big Oil's Solar Power Eclipse

RICHARD MUNSON

Joseph Lindmayer's vision has been shattered. Twenty years ago, the German-born engineer dreamed of manufacturing and marketing wafers the size of one's palm that would convert sunlight into electricity. The oil shocks lent urgency to Lindmayer's mission, and his vision began to become a reality. By 1980 his firm, Solarex, was listed in *The New York Times* as one of three most-promising high-technology companies for the coming decades (the others were Apple Computer and Genentech). By 1981 he had sold more than $20 million worth of those solar-power wafers, known as photovoltaic cells.

Today, Lindmayer is out of a job because Solarex has been taken over by Standard Oil Company of Indiana (Amoco). Some financial analysts blame Solarex's troubles on mismanagement; a few have accused Amoco of sabotaging the firm; still others say it was the victim of a capital shortage, a problem all high-tech businesses face at the outset. Whatever the cause, Lindmayer's shattered dream illustrates Big Oil's growing dominance of the solar industry.

The Federal Trade Commission considers an industry to be "concentrated" if four or fewer firms control 40 percent of the market. By early 1983, almost 80 percent of the photovoltaic market was controlled by only three firms, each owned by an oil company: Arco Solar (Atlantic-Richfield), Solarex (Amoco) and Solar Power Corporation (Exxon). Photovoltaics research has become more of a hostage to oil company funding since 1982, when the Reagan Administration cut that budget by 67 percent. Small and medium-size firms have been affected most.

Control of the photovoltaics industry would not be controversial if the market potential of its product was not so tremendous. Considered the ultimate pocket-size energy producer, "P.V.s" have been around since the 1950s when they made their debut in space satellites. But a P.V. that could generate a watt of power at noon—what is called a "peak watt"—cost about $2,000 then, a stiff price for enough electricity to light up one bulb on a Christmas tree. Today it costs $6 to $10, about what the same amount of power produced by a car battery costs. If the price drops to 70 cents late in this decade, as the Department of Energy projects, these little wafers will be on millions of roofs, providing electricity to run toasters and light houses. What is today a $500 million industry could become a multibillion-dollar one by the late 1990s. And that means big profits for whoever controls P.V. production.

The entry of Big Oil into the photovoltaic sweepstakes presents solar energy advocates with a dilemma. Some, like Richard Curry, editor of *Photovoltaics Insiders Report*, think only large corporations have the capital needed to develop and produce the devices. "I like the entrepreneurial spirit as much as anyone else," Curry said, "but let's face it—to develop any kind of player in the world class, to be competitive, requires a tremendous amount of capital right now. Where else [if not from oil companies] are you going to get that kind of money?"

But Robert Willis, president of Solenergy, a small firm which manufactures photovoltaic cells, is worried. "Small business involvement in solar energy development is of critical importance to the nation," he told me. "But it is hard to compete with oil giants which have almost unlimited capital resources."

Many fear that the oil companies will buy little P.V. firms, capitalize them, but keep their products off the market wherever solar energy is competitive with petroleum. As Alfred Dougherty, former director of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Competition cautiously put it, "If oil companies control substantial amounts of alternative energy sources, and if they act in their natural self-interest, they may slow the pace of production in order to protect the value of their oil and gas reserves."

The American Petroleum Institute and the Department of Energy are not alarmed about concentration in the P.V. industry. Although their prognosis for small business's chances of surviving over the long run isn't optimistic, they believe that several semiconductor and electronic companies that are carrying out P.V. research will soon enter the market and give the oil companies some competition. But will they? Industry insiders aren't as sure as the A.P.I. and the D.O.E. are. Most semiconductor and electronic firms already face stiff foreign competition in their markets—Japan produces 42 percent of all semiconductor chips. Why diversify when the home front is imperiled?

The high cost of materials could also keep semiconductor companies out of the P.V. field. Solar cells resemble integrated circuits conceptually, but their manufacture requires much more silicon. "A semiconductor maker can put hundreds of devices on a four-inch piece of silicon," says Willis, "so the cost of the silicon isn't that important. With that same piece, we can make only one solar cell that produces one watt."

Another problem: oil companies intimidate potential competitors. Paul Maycock, former chief of the D.O.E.'s photovoltaics division, says oil company money is "semi-infinite" and that the giants "invest three to four times the money that private venture capitalists invest." University of San Diego law professor Robert Fellmeth adds, "Much of the harm from possible price discrimination comes not from

Richard Munson is founder and former director of Solar Lobby, a 60,000-member organization in Washington, D.C., that promotes conservation and the development of renewable energy sources. He is writing a book about the rise and decline of the U.S. electric utility monopolies.

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what oil firms do but from what their competitors perceive they might do." In other words, every time an oil company puts a toe in the market, small firms without a substantial capital cushion get the jitters. What they fear is predatory pricing—an unsavory, and illegal, practice whereby companies sell their products at less than cost in order to wipe out the competition, freeing themselves to raise prices. In 1980, some oil companies sold P.V. cells for as low as $6.50 per peak watt, well below the going market price, which ranged from $9 to $12. Denying any wrongdoing, oil companies call that sort of thing "aggressive marketing."

Meanwhile, political bickering over funds in Congress is making P.V. manufacturing vulnerable to foreign competition. The United States could probably lead the world in this area if sufficient Federal assistance was forthcoming. In Japan and France, per capita government spending on renewable energy already surpasses America's, and is rising rapidly. Japan is the biggest threat, of course. Oil-short, coal-short and nuclear-shy, it has been driven by the high cost of imported oil to explore every alternative energy option. Last year, Sanyo predicted that its annual solar equipment sales would reach $451 million by 1985.

Unless there is an economic miracle, U.S. semiconductor and electronic firms won't burst into the P.V. industry in the near future. And waiting entails high costs. Newcomers will have to spend more to enter the market then, and the returns will be too low to justify the risks.

What is needed is the sort of Federal support that has traditionally enabled manufacturers of new, socially important products to survive and develop mass-production techniques to lower costs. If the Defense Department hadn't purchased massive quantities of semiconductors before the private market was ready to absorb them, pocket calculators might still cost $1,000 instead of $10. And if government procurement hadn't helped small computer companies, I.B.M. might be the only name in the field today.

Photovoltaics firms, of course, are not the only energy companies on Big Oil's acquisition list. Between 1960 and 1980, oil firms also gained control of most of the United States' uranium and coal resources—both of which compete directly or indirectly with petroleum in energy markets. On two occasions, legislation was introduced in Congress to block such acquisitions. In 1975, when there was considerable public hostility toward the oil companies because of their role in the Watergate scandal and their bloated profits, several senators introduced a bill that would have broken up the oil giants into separate production, refining, transportation and marketing companies. And in 1978, a bill was introduced to "forbid the eighteen largest oil companies from purchasing nonenergy companies with assets of more than $50 million and from purchasing other energy companies with assets of $100 million or more, unless such a purchase demonstrably would enhance competition or promote energy production." Before the 1980 election, the Democratic Party and President Jimmy Carter endorsed that attempt to bring about horizontal divestiture. But then, as in 1975, the oil giants spent millions to defeat the measure and won.

The conventional wisdom in Washington is that you still can't challenge Big Oil, especially while Ronald Reagan is in the White House and Republicans control the Senate. But a number of conservatives and liberals recognize the importance of competition within the energy industry, personified by inspired loners like Joseph Lindmayer. According to columnist James J. Kilpatrick, "The conservative principle holds that bigness is not necessarily badness, but at some point a rebuttable presumption arises. . . . That point, in my view, assuredly has been reached in the matter of the great oil companies and competing energy sources." At the other end of the political spectrum, Senator Edward Kennedy maintains that oil company ownership of competing fuels involves "an immense potential for boardroom conflicts of interest, which are likely to affect the price and availability of [these fuels and technologies] in the years to come."

The broad support for solar energy development should be translated into legislative action; the costs of failing to do so will be high. If mergers, buy-outs and predatory pricing go unchecked and if national research and procurement budgets continue to be slashed, we'll have to wait longer for photovoltaics and pay more when we get them. And we might have to stomach the indignity of switching from imported OPEC oil to imported Japanese solar cells. □

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

'De-Alignment' in Europe's Future?

ANDREW KOPKIND

Yet another specter is stalking Europe, just when the old familiar phantom has been staked, sealed and half-forgotten. Still indistinct and barely formed, it is a vision of a continent cut loose from the Atlantic alliance. It hardly has a name: "de-aligned Western Europe" is the unwieldy way academics and political activists speak of the developing reality. But what they see—or think they see—is a much sturdier structure: an independent, self-directed, dynamic superpower poised between the United States and the Soviet Union.

De-alignment of Western Europe lurks behind the crises and conflicts that have constituted the Continent's daily headlines for a decade. It is a referent for the struggles over the deployment of Pershing 2 and cruise missiles, for the efforts to expand East-West trade, for the drive to secure stable gas and oil resources for Common Market countries and for all the many arguments within the alliance over economic policy, foreign interventions, cultural interpenetration and negotiations for disarmament and peace. In the heat of such battles, de-alignment may never be mentioned, but it is a ghostly presence that both threatens and promises a resolution to conflicts that cannot be ended by the frozen international machinery of bipolar politics.

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A heightened urgency seized de-alignment theorists in the middle of November, when the first U.S. missiles reached their European bases. During those few days of protest and trepidation, the streets were filled with demonstrators; governments and political parties were in turmoil; and the Russians walked out of the intermediate-range missile negotiations in Geneva. In that critical context, about two dozen Western European and American academics and peace activists met in Amsterdam to discuss theories and strategies of de-alignment. I sat in on three days of those meetings and was struck most by the participants' unanimity in assuming that the Atlantic alliance—the Western European-American entente of thirty years' duration—was in a state of advanced, irreversible decay. What they could not agree on was equally striking: the shape, nature and quality of post-alliance Europe.

The roots of de-alignment can be traced back to the early postwar years, when the alliance was formed. The Marshall Plan and NATO were billed and sold in many ways, but their function turned out to be the integration of Western European economics and politics into the American system. The United States' World War II allies found the entente agreeable: it seemed to preclude the rise of independent German power and it promised, and delivered, a high standard of living and a considerable measure of mobility to Western Europeans. If there was a downside, it was in the reaction it provoked from the Soviet Union, which felt bound to take permanent political control over the Eastern European countries along its flank. Of course for the European left, which was excluded from full political participation in the alliance and delegitimized by the reactive brutalities occurring in the Soviet bloc, it was disastrous.

The level of integration the alliance demanded set the de-alignment process in motion. After a while, the interests and aspirations of Western European nations came into conflict with those of America. NATO was always a problem. The United States claimed it was shielding Western Europe with a NATO nuclear umbrella, but many Europeans feared they were hostages rather than protégés of American power. (Not so ironically, the Russians have always supported the American view: they lump Western Europe and the United States in one military and political package, and reject any assertions of independence.) While there was a perceived military balance, however, such disagreements could be contained. But in the last four years, increasing nuclear instability has shaken and seriously weakened the alliance. Today, the military vectors tend toward de-alignment.

Then there were the differing European and American re-
ions to the energy crises of the 1970s. The oil shock of
nade it clear to Continental economists and diplomats
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cans continued to see World War III as a thermonuclear Armageddon between the evil empire and the city on a hill, Europeans began to think that it looked a lot like World War I—an intracapitalist free-for-all over markets, resources and economic spheres of influence. At the Amsterdam conference last month, several speakers saw similarities between the configuration of the Western world in 1910 and its shape today.

But the differences between the two eras are also impressive, and they make the de-alignment dynamic problematic. The world before the Great War *was* the West—at least that's where all the power resided. Europe was center stage for global politics. That is no longer true, but Europeans cannot quite lose their sense of centrality.

The acute conflicts in current history flare along axes that run from the United States to various points in the Third World—to East and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Central America and next in line, Southern Africa. The Euromissiles, after all, are sheathed; the Soviet Union menaces its own clients more than anyone else, and no responsible European politician or military leader foresees a Soviet thrust into the West.

For the most part, Europe is marginal to present-day conflicts; that fact argues for de-alignment, yet at the same time diminishes its importance. De-aligned from the United States, Europe would be less burdened by the fear that it will be carried into catastrophe as a passive partner in U.S. policy. Its interests would not be threatened by American moves against Grenada and Nicaragua, for instance. Considered as a whole, the nations of Europe are the economic equal of the United States in many areas, and militarily they are strong enough to hold their own. By constituting itself as a third superpower bloc, a de-aligned Europe could act as a check on the aggressive instincts of the other two.

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But Europe can exercise that power only if the substance of its independence is to be commensurate with the form, if it becomes a unique third force in great-power politics. The political and ideological substance of a future independent Europe is unknown, and perhaps unknowable. There are competing visions. One has been created by the nuclear disarmament campaign; it imagines a democratized continent of Western and Eastern bloc countries, a united Germany and a redesigned socialist movement.

The other is projected by the conservative and corporate interests already in place. It treats the East as a trading partner, not as a fellow traveler on the road to a new democracy. It fears a united Germany on any basis, and it believes its future lies with the United States, even if the relationship has to be better defined. For despite the many areas of tension and competition with America, Europe's capitalist economy has the same geostrategic needs.

At this point, no political movement on the Continent seems even remotely strong enough to create a new democratic order that would challenge the other powers. At most, then, de-alignment implies a new battle for the old wine of European neutralism, without the substantive changes that would transform it into a powerful presence. It is true enough that the old West is disintegrating, to use Mary Kaldor's phrase, but a new world has yet to be born. □

A MEDIC IN NICARAGUA

A Revolution Under the Guns

TOM FRIEDEN

The government clinic is located thirty miles from the Honduran border in northern Nicaragua. Dr. Teofilo and I arrived there at 7:30 A.M., just in time to attend a birth, then give first aid to a *campesino* bleeding profusely from deep machete wounds. By 8:45 there was a steady stream of patients; the doctor took brief histories from each, examined them, wrote prescriptions, filled out forms and dispensed medicine from a small pharmacy. Hands flying from shelf to shelf, taking down bottles, filling small packets with pills, he looked like a short-order cook. By 2:30 he had, by my count, seen more than a hundred patients.

Dr. Teofilo's clinic is symbolic of the expansion of traditional health care services. More than 200 clinics have been built, most in communities without electricity or running water. Consultations and hospital care are free, and medications are available at a nominal fee. Most of Dr. Teofilo's patients had never seen a doctor before the revolution, and many still have never been to a hospital.

Since the Sandinistas took power in 1979, they have provided health care, education, housing and social services to most of the population. The Sandinistas have not only expanded those services; they have placed them under a system of community participation and control. It is an idealistic undertaking, and there is no lack of inspirational speeches. In trying to establish a decentralized government based on community organizations, the Sandinistas have excited the imagination of people throughout Latin America and Europe; volunteers from more than twenty countries work in the Ministry of Health. Dr. Teofilo is Paraguayan, and the medications he dispenses were donated by the governments of Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Mexico, Denmark, Bulgaria and Cuba. Yet few Americans have worked in Nicaragua and Americans' knowledge of the country's situation is often limited to Ronald Reagan's claim that the Sandinistas have somehow "betrayed the revolution."

I had come to Nicaragua after working as a community organizer in West Tennessee and with community health councils in New York City. I wanted to see how that kind of organizing functioned as a government policy, so I spent two months in Nicaragua working with the Ministry of Health's Popular Health Campaigns. I found that the revolution has brought concrete gains to most Nicaraguans.

In the steamy laundry of a fifty-year-old hospital I visited, sheets were being sterilized in caldrons over open fires. An elderly washerwoman told me, "Sure it's hot, but little by little we have improved the conditions of our lives." I must not have hidden my skepticism at what sounded like a slogan, for she immediately pointed to a corrugated metal canopy that shades her and the other women from the sun as they work. "This is new," she said. "Before, they didn't care how hot we were." Even the woodpile was new, she explained—before the revolution she had to scrounge the forest every time the fires ran low. She proudly told me that she had learned to read during the literacy crusade that had "alphabetized" more than 400,000 Nicaraguans. Her grandchildren are attending school for the first time, and also for the first time, medical care is available to all. "When my family or neighbors are sick, we can care for them here. I'm working for them now."

What Sergio Ramírez Mercado, a novelist and member of the governing junta, calls "the logic of the majority" has improved the lives of most Nicaraguans. They have better food, housing, education, recreation, working conditions and health care. Programs for land reform, public works and day care have been introduced. Malnutrition is abating, more than 100,000 Nicaraguans are getting new or improved housing, and one-room schoolhouses have been built in even the most isolated communities. Nicaragua, which has a population of 2.8 million, recently enrolled its millionth stude

Theoretically, any government can expand social se
What is exciting about Nicaragua is that the Sandir
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Tom Frieden is a medical student in New York City.

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of the ministry, who discuss them in groups and suggest changes based on their experience in the field. The ministry incorporates the suggestions it accepts and sends the plan back to the local level for a final reading. As a result, even low-level officials have a hand in making policy.

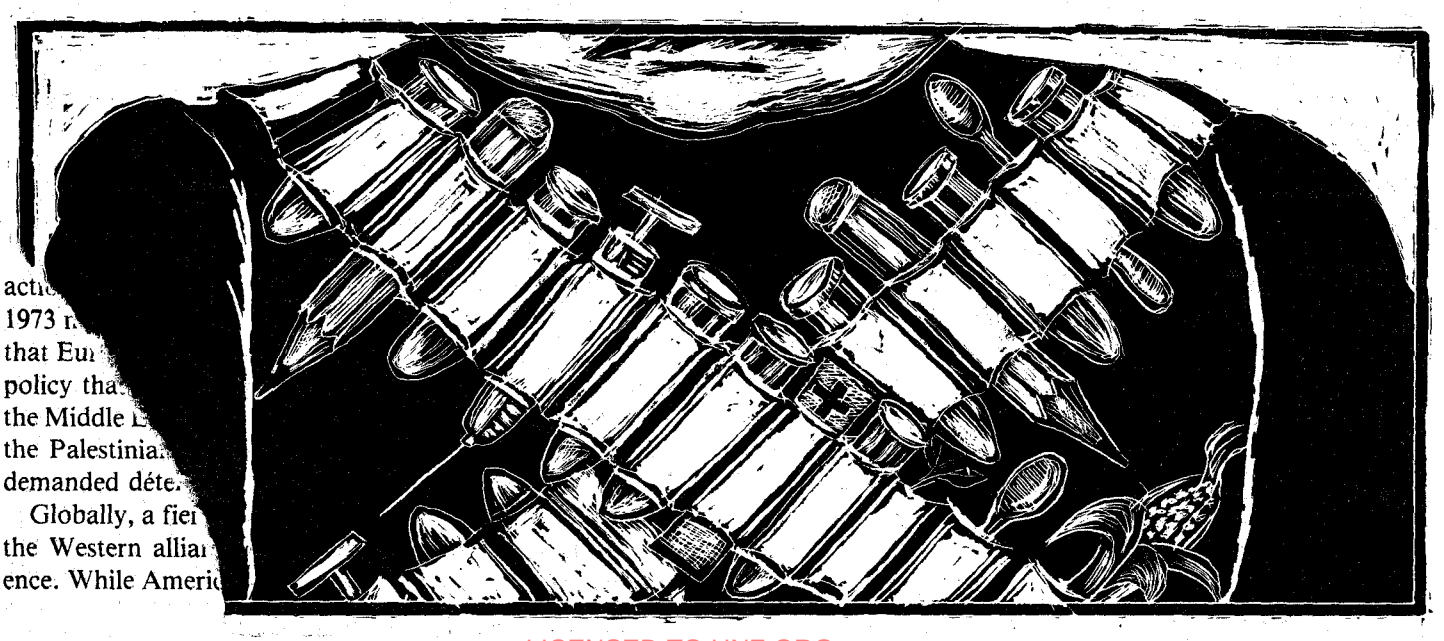
The first-draft proposal on the training of volunteer health workers stipulated that they had to know how to read and write. I was among a group of rural educators who discussed the rule and recommended that those who cannot read and write be allowed in the training program so long as they enroll in adult education classes. That is now national policy.

Volunteer community workers in Nicaragua are called *brigadistas*. The role they play typifies the Sandinistas' ability to mobilize the people. They are chosen from local womens' associations, farmers' and workers' unions, youth groups and Catholic "base communities." *Brigadistas* were first used as teachers in the literacy crusade. Now they work primarily in the medical sector, conducting public health and disease-prevention programs. About 10 percent of all Nicaraguan adults have served as *brigadistas* in the literacy or health campaigns. In the latter, they receive training and supplies from the Ministry of Health and organize their communities to participate in health projects. The ministry directs their activities through national campaigns—for malaria control, immunization, latrine-building, pest and rabies control, improved sanitation and nutrition. As a result of the *brigadistas*' efforts, the country has rapidly improved the dismal health care system inherited from the Somoza era. A health care infrastructure is being built, and even tiny mountain villages have malaria-control programs and centers that treat infants suffering from dehydration caused by diarrhea. In the past four years, the infant mortality rate has dropped from 120 deaths per 1,000 live births to about 90 deaths per 1,000. Infectious diseases are likely to be fatal to undernourished people, but *brigadista*-run vaccination campaigns have brought many diseases under control. There were 101 cases of polio in 1979, for example, but not one in the past two years. Measles can quickly kill a malnourished child; there were 1,270 cases in 1979, but 226 in 1982.

The success of community participation programs is perhaps best exemplified by the campaign to wipe out polio. The vaccine, which is given orally in droplet form, can be administered by volunteers after minimal training. *Brigadistas* have the responsibility for protecting their communities from disease. Using illustrated booklets prepared by the Ministry of Health, *brigadistas* explained the value of vaccination to their neighbors, many of whom were unfamiliar with modern medical techniques. They took a census of all children 5 years old and younger, and arranged for them to be vaccinated at a central location (in rural Nicaragua, that can mean a two-hour walk for someone who lives "nearby"). More than 80 percent of Nicaraguan children in that age group have been immunized in the past three years. A regional director of popular health campaigns showed me the three-year statistics which he had just compiled. More than 360,000 polio vaccinations had been administered. "This number," he said, beaming, "is pure people."

But the Sandinistas' grass-roots version of revolution has its problems. The apathy that is the legacy of the Somoza dictatorship has not been entirely overcome. For generations Nicaraguans had only limited control over their lives; their efforts to work cooperatively to solve common problems were met by brutal repression. Many *campesinos* are overwhelmed by the hardships of daily life and want only to be left alone, both by the U.S.-backed *contras*, who burn their crops and shoot at them while they are harvesting, and by the Sandinistas, who urge them to join community organizations. To encourage participation, the Sandinistas have devised a system of incentives. By joining lending cooperatives, *campesinos* get money to improve their farms. By forming an organization, members of a community can send several students to technical schools on full scholarships.

Not all problems are due to the legacy of the past. Community organizations are valuable to the government be-



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cause they provide essential services but also because they generate support for its policies. The relationship between the two institutions is intricate, and is not free of artifice. Some communities form organizations merely to receive benefits, and never bother about holding meetings and doing the work. The Sandinistas sometimes exaggerate the influence of the organizations. For a month before the celebration of the fourth anniversary of the revolution, it was an open secret that farmers' debts, incurred through a government loan program designed to increase production, would be forgiven on that day. The progovernment press carried articles with headlines like "A Just Demand From the Farmers' Union," designed to create the impression that cancellation of the debts resulted from popular pressure in the weeks before the anniversary. The Sandinistas are sincere in their desire to empower communities and individuals. However, the organizations are intended not only to lobby for their communities but also to do the basic work of the revolution—teaching health concepts, digging latrines. That means community organizations serve as quasi-governmental bodies, theoretically existing in every town and village in Nicaragua, a requirement that may be incompatible with spontaneous participation.

Popular control is not a panacea: no matter how cohesive, communities have tensions. I accompanied a *brigadista* who was taking a census, identifying children with diarrhea (the major cause of infant mortality) and teaching parents how to safeguard their children from future infections. As we approached one hut, he explained that I would have to go in alone; the owner had once threatened to kill him over a boundary dispute. There were two badly dehydrated children inside.

Is the Sandinista project of building community-oriented socialism succeeding? There have been major advances in many sectors, and there is a growing feeling, especially among the young, that for the first time the people are deciding how to construct their country. There are inherent limitations to the use of community organizations, and there is always the danger that they will be used mainly to generate support for the government. Now, of course, the debate about the revolution's success or failure is overshadowed by the war. External aggression has forced the Sandinistas to rely more heavily on community organizations to rally support. The question is, If Nicaraguans are left alone to determine their future, will the community organizations return to their advocacy role?

The state of war brought on by daily *contra* attacks accentuates both the positive and negative aspects of the revolution. Despite the pressures, the Sandinistas try to continue making social progress. People fleeing from war zones on the Honduran border—isolated areas with poor living conditions and unproductive lands—are organized into self-sufficient communities. They have constructed health, education and recreation facilities; they are taught to build better houses and improved sanitation systems, and to grow and cook more nutritious types of food than they had been accustomed to. As a result, many refugees are healthier than they were before being relocated.

When the Sandinistas took power, they tried to create a government of "national unity," including people from all segments of society. The Sandinistas' esteem for *campesinos* alienated some wealthy Nicaraguans, and Reagan's economic blockade has increased the disaffection. The blockade has especially inconvenienced the upper class: one woman lamented to me that she has to have friends bring special shampoo from abroad for her poodle. The Sandinistas wanted to be the first true revolutionary movement to coexist with the bourgeoisie. But daily *contra* attacks in the north, economic sabotage and danger from the "internal enemy" make some Sandinistas wish that more members of the upper classes had left the country with Somoza in 1979.

In response to sabotage, to reports of ties between journalists, trade unionists and the C.I.A., and to the rapid growth of evangelical religious sects which preach that community organizations are communist and that communists go to hell, the Sandinistas have curtailed civil liberties. The opposition press is censored, strikes are prohibited and several foreign priests have been expelled. People are becoming afraid to criticize the government, even in private. While these actions serve the Sandinistas' desire to remain in power, they were prompted by real danger. Since 1981 more than a thousand Nicaraguans have been killed by the *contras*, and economic damage caused by U.S.-financed attacks has cost roughly as much as the country earns from its exports during an entire year.

The Sandinistas have consistently taken a conciliatory line toward the United States. Indeed, they have little choice: most of their trade is with the United States, the Soviet Union has made it clear that it can't give unconditional military support and on July 26, Castro gave the Nicaraguans a sharp hint that they are going to have to defend themselves. The Sandinistas must continue to make social progress to build and maintain domestic support. But faced with implacable hostility from the Reagan Administration, all they can do is hope that *something* will change: that Reagan will lose in 1984 and U.S. policies will miraculously shift, or that the guerrillas will win in El Salvador or Guatemala so that Nicaragua will not be so isolated. Ironically, Reagan's policies, purportedly designed to stop Nicaragua from exporting revolution, have made the Sandinistas' success and even survival increasingly dependent on the success of other revolutionary movements.

The Sandinistas have recently moderated internal restrictions on basic freedoms. They are negotiating with religious and business leaders, loosening censorship of the opposition press, asking Salvadoran guerrilla leaders to leave the country and distancing themselves from Cuba. It is revealing that those actions are being taken as *contra* attacks escalate. The Sandinistas are now confident of the support of the majority of Nicaraguans and so feel strong enough to withstand C.I.A. attempts to foment internal discontent. They have shown a willingness to address the concerns the United States and the Contadora countries have expressed about their policies and to seek improved relations with them.

The Sandinista revolution is an example of the growing

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power of popular movements in the region. By continuing to support brutal dictatorships such as those in El Salvador and Guatemala, the U.S. government will be forced to commit increasing resources to maintaining repressive, unpopular regimes. If we are interested in stable and humanitarian allies, the Nicaraguan government, one of the few in Central America with the enthusiastic support of its people, is a good candidate. □

In the Gulf

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

leadership is shaky. Recently President Saddam Hussein was forced to remove his half brother from the key post of chief of intelligence.

Aware that the Iranians can outlast them, the Iraqis feel increasingly pressured to intensify the war and seek a quick victory. They have been encouraged in this course by their allies on the Arabian Peninsula, who are reluctant to continue financing the war at a time when their oil revenues are in decline. Jordan and Egypt want to see Iraq prevail in order to weaken Iran's strongest supporter, Syria, which is now pressing its advantage in Lebanon. The conservative Arab states and hence the Western powers would regard an Iraqi victory, or at worst, its avoidance of defeat, as a counterweight to the pro-Soviet Syrians.

Furthermore, the risk of a pro-Iraqi tilt has declined because of a second major development: the rift between Iran and the Soviet Union. Until the early part of the year, the West feared that intervention or any open hostility toward Iran would draw in the Soviet Union on the side of the Khomeini regime. With the persecution of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party in Iran and increased Soviet arms shipments to Iraq, the possibility of an Iranian-Soviet alliance has diminished considerably.

At the same time, the West's economic stake in Iran has risen. Western governments have concluded that the Islamic Republic will survive Khomeini's death and that prospects for doing business with it are good. Japan, which imports 400,000 barrels of oil a day through Kharg—one-sixth of Iran's total export—is particularly keen to expand its trade there. The thinking in Western capitals is that the long-term objective of "winning back" Iran can be achieved better by negotiating a working relationship with the Islamic regime than by backing a royalist coup against Khomeini or his successors. The fact that the subject of improving relations with Teheran was on the agenda at the Williamsburg summit in May shows that it has a high priority with U.S. and European leaders.

Western policy in the region is complicated by the fact that Iraq and Iran each border Turkey, a member of NATO. So far, Ankara has remained neutral and has profited from trade with both sides. But recently the government has discreetly strengthened its ties with Iran, providing pipeline facilities so that it can export oil and gas without turning to the Soviet Union, and cooperating to control anti-Khomeini Kurdish and communist insurgents along the common border.

But Turkey has longstanding territorial claims in northern Iraq and would be alarmed by any campaign Iran might launch to ally itself with the Kurdish separatists who inhabit that region. Ankara has therefore intimated that were Iran to invade northern Iraq, Turkey would seriously consider intervening. The prospect of NATO's eastern sentry becoming embroiled in the gulf war worries Western strategists.

Because of their tangled interests in the region, the Western powers apparently have decided that their best course is to back Iraq's escalation of the war, with the aim of imposing a peace on the two states. Teheran is, in effect, being offered a choice: it can either agree to a truce on reasonable terms or face a greatly strengthened enemy.

Peace offers have been made most recently in the U.N. Security Council, where France introduced a resolution that goes a considerable way toward meeting Iran's demands that Iraq be condemned for launching the war and that it pay reparations. The West is obviously also hoping that Iranian leaders will recognize the benefits of increased economic cooperation at a time when their people's revolutionary fervor is waning and the country's economy is stalled.

The alternative facing Iran is a daunting one. Iraq may hold its missiles as a deterrent. It may also use them if Iran tries to block it from exporting oil from its facilities at Fao, which were closed by Iran early in the war.

The Iraqi situation is also dire, and the temptation to hit Kharg must be strong. If attacked there, Iran would probably retaliate by closing the Strait of Hormuz, as it has often threatened. But the U.S. Navy has a task force in the region and could launch antiblockade strikes from its carriers as well as from airfields in Oman and Saudi Arabia. U.S. actions could include attacks on bases and naval facilities on the Iranian mainland. Such clashes would frighten away international tankers, but if the U.S. forces quickly prevailed, the Strait of Hormuz would be kept open. Iran, meanwhile, would gradually be deprived of the oil revenues it needs to import food and weapons.

Such a scenario suggests that France's delivery of the Super-Etendard jets was part of a coordinated strategy and not contrary to the advice of its allies, as was widely reported. The West wants to impose a peace now that the danger level of the Iran-Iraq war has risen. A U.S.-Iranian clash might be justified by Washington as belated revenge for the hostage affair and as a response to the alleged Iranian involvement in the explosion that killed 240 U.S. marines in Beirut on October 23. The West is giving Khomeini a stark choice, confident that whatever his response the West will benefit. The danger is that the scheme will get out of control. Khomeini's Iran has never behaved predictably. □

Fred Halliday is a fellow of the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam, and an editorial associate of New Left Review *and* MERIP Reports. *He is the author of* Arabia Without Sultans: A Political Survey of Instability in the Arab World *(Vintage) and* Iran: Dictatorship and Development *(Penguin).*

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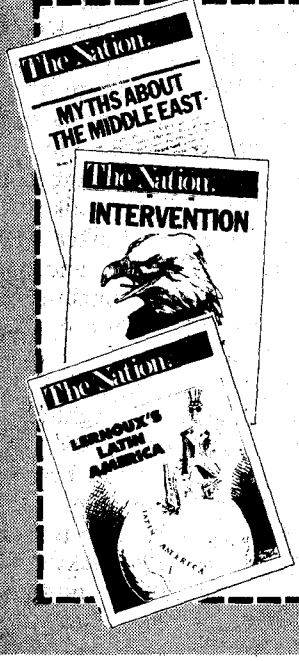

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

From Rags to Rage to Art

PATRICIA VIGDERMAN

IN SEARCH OF OUR MOTHERS' GARDENS: Womanist Prose. *By Alice Walker. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 397 pp. $14.95.*

In the title essay of this collection, Alice Walker looks at black women's experience through the lens of Virginia Woolf's remark, "Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman." The heritage of black women artists, she suggests, is not anonymous literature but creations like the priceless quilt now hanging in the Smithsonian Institution, made by "an anonymous Black woman in Alabama." The uncorrected galleys I read have a brilliant typographical error: the quilt, they say, is "made of bits and pieces of worthless rage."

The conversion of rags to rage and then to art is a large part of Walker's work. The book's pervasive concern is the question of what it means to be a black Southern woman writer and heiress to all that's implied in those three adjectives. The title essay is about laying claim to that inheritance, and the title itself is quite literal: Walker's mother is so gifted a gardener that to this day perfect strangers driving by her house "ask to stand or walk among my mother's art." This essentially anonymous artistry is, like the quilt from Alabama, an alternative to madness, to the mutilated vision of the slave poet Phillis Wheatley or the blind-souled women in Jean Toomer's novel *Cane*. As the Creator in the Garden, Walker's mother conveys an idea of art that includes the ability to hang on.

The essay was originally a talk, and this image may be more powerful when called up by Walker's own voice: on the printed page it seems somewhat contrived. A much more satisfying treatment of the elder Walker's role in her daughter's creative drama is in an essay called "Beyond the Peacock: The Reconstruction of Flannery O'Connor." Here, Walker describes the trip she and her mother took to visit first the share-farmer shack in which the Walker family lived in 1952 and then "Andalusia," the country house outside Milledgeville, Georgia, where Flannery O'Connor lived the last thirteen years of her life. The two houses are minutes apart on the same road. The coincidence is important because it was O'Connor's work that made Walker realize she would never be satisfied with a segregated literature. The essay is important because it is when Walker is following her longing for a culture that does not discriminate by race that she is most true to herself.

In "Beyond the Peacock," Walker and her mother stand in the pasture before the rotted-out, hay-filled shack that was once their home, amazed at the beautiful daffodils that now cover the yard. Alice remembers mostly misery: her segregated school, a water moccasin that frightened her, a lost cat. Her mother remembers the landlord who cheated her out of her half of the calves she had raised for him. Then she says, "Well, old house, one good thing you gave us. It was right here that I got my first washing machine!" The ordinariness of her determined optimism intensifies the cruelty of the past.

The dilemma in this essay is how a black Southern writer is to place a white one, given that they stand on opposite sides of that cruelty. "What I feel at the moment of knocking," writes Walker of approaching O'Connor's door, "is fury that someone is paid to take care of her house, though no one lives in it, and that her house still, in fact, stands, while mine . . . is slowly rotting into dust. Her house becomes—in an instant—the symbol of my own disinheritance." And yet she says O'Connor's *Mystery and Manners*, "which is primarily concerned with the moral imperatives of the serious writer of fiction, is the best of its kind I have ever read."

When Walker is balancing that paradox of social injustice and artistic integrity, she is most satisfying. What she admires about O'Connor's fiction, she explains, is that both black and white characters are demythified—"white folks without the magnolia . . . black folks without melons and superior racial patience." Walker describes her mother with that same fidelity to real life. She knows that her mother felt the same anger she herself felt at the door of Andalusia but that in her Christian cosmology, the injustice is neutralized by O'Connor's early and painful death. Walker herself doesn't have five minutes for this outlook, but she is not trying to give her mother mythic meaning here. Rather, she is doing her mother the honor of presenting her as she really is. It is quite natural, then, that her mother should have the last word. As they are leaving, Walker murmurs something about being inspired by the splendor of the peacocks that still strut the lawns of Andalusia. "They'll eat up every bloom you have, if you don't watch out," comments her mother, who sticks to the truths a garden teaches.

Alice Walker has another model, one more important to her than Flannery O'Connor: Zora Neale Hurston, whose name appears in essay after essay. What Hurston offers and what sets her apart from most other celebrities of the Harlem Renaissance (whom she referred to as the "niggerati") is her conviction that Afro-American folk culture is as rich a wellspring for art as any Anglo-American source. "Intellectual lynching" is the name she gave black artists' and critics' emulation of whites, and she repudiated the criticism of bourgeois blacks who found her (very successful) black folk musical *The Great Day* detrimental to the cause of integration. "Fawn as you will," she wrote in 1934. "Roll your eyes in ecstasy and ape [the white man's] every move, but until we have placed something upon his streetcorner that is our own, we are right back where we were when they filed our iron collar off."

In spite of her achievements, Hurston died in poverty and was buried in an unmarked grave. Walker's image of that neglected, weed-choked Florida cemetery, the "Garden of the Heavenly Rest," belongs beside the picture of her mother's garden. Indeed, "Looking for Zora," which describes Walker's 1973 trip to find Hurston's grave and put a stone on it, is the real conclusion to Walker's history of the fate of black women artists.

Her account is a collection of anecdotes about Hurston's neighbors, a friend or two and a lively assistant from the funeral home that buried her, who slogs through the crackling, hissing weeds with Walker to help keep up her courage against lurking snakes. The trip left Walker emotionally mute; she leaves the conclusion of the essay to her

Patricia Vigderman is managing editor of Modern Times *magazine.*

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Four Poems

TO SPEAK OF WATER MUSIC

. . . a shrub
of transience, beautiful, admits
welcoming your memory.
—Paul Celan

To speak of water musically smoothing
stones as it bends past marsh iris,

temple bell in fog under Mt. Fuji,
is to make too much of the windchime.

Closer to say curtain of rain
at broken window, to pitch glass notes

against the damp-warped piano. Over our bed
the ceiling maps with waterways a country

like this one where pale rhizomes
generate root by undermining root;

where moss, propagating by division,
lushly furs over having and abandon alike.

Where nothing's required of us but neglect,
closer to say chimney, blocked fireplace,

flues—what surrounds a closeness
not touch, not intimate, whispering

into the ear's shell: evening's
land-sea breeze rowing through forest

over us, drifting spores offshore.
Waves of passage, passion's wash—

only will binds us to anything,
love that is will. Nothing requires us.

That to come back to as if it were home.

TO MARKET

Uncrated by thunder, first drops against slate
erase the diagonal light that showered

dry as sanctity on us. In air this close
we're worldly, unsalvageable,

water and salt reminders of tidepools'
unabashed stench. To be other—

saintly as turnips' shaved heads
rolled in a box, scarecrow flapping

at its stake, flaring at endearments
as at blasphemy. "Love," the vendor snarls

over his meaty shoulder, "where's
the bleeding knife?" Tearing the cowl

off a cabbage, he turns on me,
backed by onions' choked ranks: "And what

can I do for you, my love?" Tell me
what you call each other when you mean love

less blade than lure. Down the walk
a man meditates over something he cradles

from the rain—the blank, martyred face
of a cauliflower in its nimbus of leaves.

KIN

Cheek rouged by bedspread slept on
or hand tracing anger, a rough caress—
this strawberry blotch will fade

like argument or flowers;
but the birthmarked infant
will be the farmchild assigned

to catalogue the cows' markings,
worth more than names.
Will be the woman feeling akin

to leopard, giraffe, all the spotted ones,
camouflaged prey and predator
dodging notice in a veldt's thin shadows.

Would be rough grass, the rare tree;
would scatter, wind-lifted dust,
not twist into its fiery focus.

The store's three-way mirror triples her,
the tawny coat she's trying,
and unfolds a room in her image,

embracing her without pity or empathy.
A rush of wind like water. Cover of night
revealing a red planet, its strain

of ancient light filtering toward us.
A room she might love
because its demarcation doesn't last.

THE ROMAN BATHS AT CHESTERS

Up from a river polished to armor
by raw light, dew takes the rise
blade by blade

to the baths glassed over with it—
the cold room, the tepid, the scalding,
where recruits scrubbed themselves Roman.

Expatriate in exile treacherous
with cleanliness and good pay,
they wrote home for long underwear

and richer food. From them not
what their emperor grandly meant to leave
but the homely cherry, domesticated rose.

Echoes of their chisels in *basilica*,
aqueduct, *auxiliaries* who patrolled the wall
legions were assigned to build,

one stone against invasion, the next
against revolt. Past the Tiber,
past gray Alps vaguely north,

a ruler's sweeping gesture mortared
miles of air. It wasn't enough,
three and a half centuries

just fishline skimming stream
before surface gives and line sinks,
no longer its own reflection.

Empire of burr and heather,
citizen sheep and rock.

Debora Greger

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subject. On whether being black is "a lowdown dirty deal," Hurston wrote, "No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife."

Hurston died in 1960, the year Walker's mother bought a television set. That enabled Alice, a high school student, to see Martin Luther King Jr. being hustled into a police wagon in handcuffs. The sight changed her life, focusing in an instant the idea of fighting for one's inheritance. Her essay "Choice: A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." stresses a freedom that is different from Hurston's self-assured and lonely independence. It's a vision that sees an unmarked grave as a specifically political consequence.

King, she says, gave young Southern blacks the choice of staying home, the choice not to go north to seek their fortune, not to accept disinheritance. Where Hurston saw her black community as irrevocably separate from white culture (and a good thing, too), the black community for Walker has been one engaged in a struggle with white America. An important part of her adult life was spent in the civil rights movement, and her perception of the relationship between America and its black citizens is much more openly angry than Hurston's.

While it gives her great satisfaction to see a black teen-ager happily swimming in the pool of a motel formerly for whites only, her memories of how bitter was the battle to gain that simple acceptance finally drove her from the South. In "Looking to the Side, and Back," she contends that the black community was wrong to talk "only about the bravery, never about the cost," wrong to refuse to deal with any personal damage that did not fit the black self-image or the political morality of the time.

That willingness to cut through the jargon of race relations accounts for her unorthodox demand that black *women's* reality be honored as something in its own right. She has invented the word "womanist" to describe "a black feminist or feminist of color." The nuances of the word include outrageousness, willfullness, seriousness, capableness and wholeness. It connotes an attitude that is antiracist and pleasure-loving. Walker implies that a womanist is deeper in tone than a feminist: "Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender." Indeed, the very sound of the word is more solid.

Her definition is full of health and hope, a manifesto of what she wants for black women. It is somewhat at odds, however, with many of the most interesting observations in the essays. Walker argues that black women should be free *not* to be strong. The invincible black woman is a staple of American mythology—both black and white—and it is damaging to black women's sense of themselves and to their sense of what they owe black men. In "A Letter to the Editor of *Ms.*," she rejects the quasi-feminist claim that black women are the "only true queens of the universe," and not just for the usual anti-pedestal reasons. Queens, she points out, are bred to know their lineage and history; black women hardly know their own mothers' lives. "I think," she says drily, "we might waive the wearing of a crown until we have at least seriously begun our work."

When Walker sticks to the truths a garden teaches, she is witty, generous and serious. She is at her best in the essays that tell her own story—"Beyond the Peacock," the ones about Hurston, the several tributes to King, the vignettes of ordinary life in the post-movement South, "Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self" (the emotional history of being blind in one eye) and a long 1973 interview. In many of her public pronouncements, though, she seems to be striking attitudes. White American writers tend, she writes in "Saving the Life That Is Your Own,"

> to end their books and their characters' lives as if there were no better existence for which to struggle. The gloom of defeat is thick.
>
> By comparison, black writers seem always involved in a moral and/or physical struggle, the result of which is expected to be some kind of larger freedom.

That is nonsense, and her readings of the two books she uses to illustrate the point (Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*) are so cursory as to be dishonest. She quickly moves on to a much easier point: that while Chopin is now a staple of women's literature classes, Hurston is not.

The implausibility of that passage would hardly bear pointing out were it not more than an off-the-cuff reply to an unexpected question from the audience. Walker seems to apply an imperative for dispelling "the gloom of defeat" to her own fiction, to its detriment. Although her Pulitzer Prizewinning *The Color Purple* tells a story of brutality and injustice, it succeeds because the language is so lively, the tale so rich and various that the very pleasure of reading it implies hope—indeed, a "larger freedom." But I stopped believing in both the book and the main character, Celie, every time I felt I was seeing "larger freedom" road signs. When a moral truth has been deliberately placed on the path, the reader is being treated like a fool, and when Celie becomes a mouthpiece for Walker's opinions she becomes a foolish character. By the end of the book she has changed so completely from a helpless, sexually abused peasant into the powerful center of a happy, down-home buzz that the outlines of her character are blurred.

This eagerness to make the womanist point prevents *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* from being wholly satisfying. The main problem for a socially conscious artist is to preserve emotional honesty when the situation seems almost to demand excess and posturing. The disappointments of this collection are perhaps an indication of how very difficult that is.

A book review, "*Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson*," for instance, tells the story of a nineteenth-century black woman whose remarkable spiritual experiences and powers led her ultimately to the Shakers. It's a story that offers Walker the opportunity to discuss issues she cares about: human spiritual life, the lost history of black women, the exclusion of women from community and church leadership. Yet instead of taking up any one of those, she drifts into a tangential argument with the book's editor about whether Jackson could properly be called a lesbian, and if indeed the term lesbian is at all appropriate to describe black woman-bonding, since it probably predates Sappho and, anyway, the symbolism of Lesbos being an island is "far from positive." That all may well be true, but as the conclusion of an essay that promises more serious topics, it's only irritating.

These essays have appeared in a great range of publications: *Conditions*, *Ms.*, *The Black Scholar*, *Mother Jones*, *The New York Times*; many of them were written as talks. As its piecemeal construction implies, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* is not intended as a major statement of either esthetic or political thought. Nevertheless, in many of these pieces Walker avoids the larger and more difficult issues in favor of much smaller, flashy assertions. The

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book hasn't been assembled with the care lavished on her mother's garden, and some of the promised blooms have been eaten by the peacocks. □

In the Industrial Vernacular

MAURICE ISSERMAN

WORKERS' STRUGGLES, PAST AND PRESENT: A "Radical America" Reader. *Edited by James Green. Temple University Press. 410 pp. $29.95. Paper $9.95.*

In Northampton, Massachusetts, the city where I live, "nineteenth-century industrial vernacular" has come into its own as the architectural style of choice among hip entrepreneurs. Developers have long since bought up the available stock of red brick factories still standing along the Mill River. Fashionable boutiques and luxury condominiums fill the spaces where a century ago silk was woven and brass buttons fashioned. Plans are now in the works for brand-new mock mills to house more offices and restaurants downtown. Roll over, William Blake: the era of dark, satanic mill.chic is upon us.

Far be it from me to do anything to interfere with the forward march of the hanging fern. Still, it might be a nice gesture if the Northampton City Council passed an ordinance requiring each newly converted mill to display a plaque by the entrance listing the names of every man, woman and child who labored in the building in its earlier incarnation. Working lives in America are sold too cheaply, remembered too briefly. I don't, however, expect the Council to make this suggestion a high priority.

But there are grounds for optimism. A new generation of labor historians, building on the work of David Montgomery, Herbert Gutman and David Brody, has written a substantial collection of scholarly studies of the history of American unions, workplaces and working-class communities. The University of Illinois Press and Temple University Press have both issued impressive series of books on labor history: thanks to their efforts we know a great deal more about the lives and beliefs of brass workers, secretaries, coal miners and nurses than we did only a few years ago.

Maurice Isserman teaches history at Smith College. He is writing a book about the American left in the 1950s.

Given the average age, interests and political sensibilities of the new labor historians, it's safe to say that most of them have a dogeared collection of *Radical America* sitting home on the bookshelf. The New Left did not pass many institutional legacies on to subsequent generations of radicals: *Radical America*, which began publication as "An SDS Journal of American Radicalism" in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1967 and moved to Boston at the start of the 1970s, proved the exception. The journal was blessed with a core of capable editors and found a stable constituency by gearing its appeal midway between the university (where many one-time S.D.S.ers were beginning careers as junior faculty) and the diminished ranks of the activist left. James Green, a labor historian at the University of Massachusetts and a *Radical America* editor since 1972, has put together *Workers' Struggles, Past and Present,* a representative sample of articles from the journal on labor history and contemporary labor issues.

Not everyone who was around to witness the collapse of S.D.S. wound up in the Weather Underground or as an understudy for the characters in *The Big Chill*. As Green notes in his introduction to *Workers' Struggles*, "Far more student radicals joined Marxist-Leninist groups, took jobs in factories and moved into working-class neighborhoods, and became active in local unions. In its own way *Radical America* took this turn toward the working class." Some of the activity associated with this "turn toward the working class" was naïve and misguided, and by the late 1970s the various self-proclaimed vanguard parties of the proletariat had gone into receivership. But useful lessons were learned along the way. Rank-and-file activists became shop stewards and sometimes officers of union locals. For the first time since the end of the 1940s, radicals began playing a significant role in the leadership of the union movement, at least at the local level.

Radical America's own turn toward the working class started under the tutelage of some old left veterans who had moved from the unorthodox Trotskyism of Max Shachtman to a neosyndicalist celebration of "Working-Class Self-Activity." In a 1969 essay of that name reprinted here, George Rawick argues that wildcat strikes were a new and higher stage of class consciousness through which "workers struggle simultaneously against the bosses, the State, and the union"; eventually they would be supplanted by an open revolutionary struggle for "a government of workers' councils." As the apocalyptic expectations of the late 1960s faded, and some radicals began moving up in local union hierarchies, *Radical America* abandoned its reflexive hostility to the established labor movement, but it retained a fascination with the struggle on the shop floor for workers' control. As Green argues in his introduction to part one:

> A constant battle for control has been waged in the American workplace. Indeed, the struggle to resist capitalist control has been bitter and protracted, like a guerrilla war in which the invading forces of capital have enormous scientific and technological advantages, but are unable to subdue the forces of resistance.

The military analogy suggests a degree of grim purpose that can be misleading: one can hear in it an echo of *Radical America*'s early vision of workers' councils raising the red flag over the factory gates and declaring all capitalist governments abolished. When the concept of workers' control is used more cautiously it can be illuminating. Traditional labor historians were at a loss about how to write on workers who were not represented by unions. But Susan Porter Benson's 1978 article "'The Clerking Sisterhood': Rationalization and the Work Culture of Saleswomen in American Department Stores, 1890-1960" views the behavior of this group of workers through the prism of the "informal work group." The women Benson studied maintained a set of rituals and values to govern their behavior at work every bit as complex as those of a fifteenth-century artisans' guild or a nineteenth-century craft union. Saleswomen restricted their daily sales to an informal but commonly accepted number; those who violated the quota were ostracized. Saleswomen developed a private language to communicate with one another when customers or supervisors were within earshot: by calling out "Oh, Henrietta" a saleswoman notified her co-workers that her customer was a disagreeable "hen." Self-service displays in department stores were sabotaged by workers,

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who failed to keep them adequately stocked.

Analogous practices can be found among factory workers, clerical workers and probably every other group of workers. But what do they signify? Old left labor historians ransacked the written record of the labor movement and triumphantly pointed to the articulate minority who were or sounded like socialists. *Radical America* rejected that approach, and focused instead on the inarticulate majority. To cite Green's introduction again, "Rather than despairing over the lack of theory, the corruption of unions, or the absence of a strong Socialist Party, *RA* writers were inspired to examine actual workers' struggles, past and present, to see in what ways they prefigured the coming socialist society."

Radical America, admirably enough, has also rejected the Leninist notion of an outside elite bringing consciousness to the working class. It has returned to an earlier Marxist tradition which saw the working class as the agent of its own emancipation. But in doing so it has overinflated the concept of workers' control, making it an all-purpose substitute for party, strategy and vision of a new society. If no one but intellectuals are equipped to decode the ways in which workers' struggles "prefigure the coming socialist society," we may as well go back to *What Is To Be Done?*

Workers' Struggles remains a valuable collection, with fine contributions by, among others, Roslyn L. Feldberg on clerical workers' unions, Roy Rosenzweig on councils of the unemployed and Manning Marable on A. Philip Randolph. Forget the plaques on the old mill buildings. The new labor history is a better way of remembering. □

Downhill all the Way

CONSTANCE CASEY

DASHIELL HAMMETT: A Life. *By Diane Johnson. Random House. 344 pp. $17.95.*

Supposing that I would feel flattered, a high-school English teacher gave me a B on an important term paper because although it was an A paper, she believed I was capable of better work. The same problem, with me as the teacher this time, presents itself in weighing Diane Johnson's biography of mystery writer Dashiell Hammett. If any literary critic in America can be consistently counted on for A work, it's Diane Johnson. Her intelligent, witty and knowledgeable criticism, which often graces the pages of *The New York Times Book Review* and *The New York Review of Books*, was recently collected in a dazzling book, *Terrorists and Novelists*. To further excite expectations, Johnson is the author of five novels, two of which, *Lying Low* and *The Shadow Knows*, deal with uncaught criminals and innocent victims. *Dashiell Hammett: A Life* is an A biography but a disappointment to fans of Hammett and Johnson.

"Literary biography," Johnson has written, "usually concerns itself with how an artist's life and personality influence his work, and usually fails to engage the problem of how the writer's work affects the growth of his personality." The reader of *Dashiell Hammett* will come away knowing a lot about the writer's life—including much that hasn't been revealed before—but not much about how his life influenced his work or how his work affected his personality.

Johnson gives herself room to speculate in the introduction. "The hard-boiled hero," she writes, and the description applies equally to Hammett, "does not express his emotions (though he possesses them), and assumes himself to be outside a society that is itself corrupt and has disappointed him." After positing the familiar but still fascinating idea that in mystery writing "the crime is a symbolic enactment of some innate human impulse of lust or greed, and its solution . . . represents the reintegration of the personality with society, its lawless impulses quelled so that society can again function smoothly," she then notes Hammett's aberrations from the classic mystery model.

"In Hammett's peculiar version," Johnson observes, "society is returned to its former state, but that itself is shown to be corrupt and false." An even weirder aberration, Johnson suggests, is that the central crime in two Hammett novels, *The Glass Key* and *Red Harvest*, is the murder of a son by his father, an insight which would be more interesting if it were true (the father in *Red Harvest*, though corrupt, is not a murderer). She wonders if the vision of paternal authority as menacing could have been the basis for Hammett's left-wing politics; could it even explain why he stopped writing at the age of 40? Was he defying the fatherly editors (Alfred Knopf and Bennett Cerf, among others) who enthusiastically fostered him? Unfortunately, having raised those issues in the introduction, she doesn't explore them in the book itself.

Johnson's research is exhaustive as she takes us from Hammett's youth in Baltimore through his days as a Pinkerton detective on the West Coast, his productive writing period in San Francisco during the late 1920s and the depressed years that followed in Hollywood and New York. She consults census records and the Baltimore City directory to find out just how crowded the street Hammett grew up on was. That it was very crowded is significant as well as colorful, since crowded rooms and streets generate tuberculosis, which plagued Hammett all his life.

With a grade-school education and a few false starts at employment, Hammett found escape from Baltimore and satisfying work with the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. On assignment in Montana to police a 1917 miners' strike, Hammett declined an offer of $5,000 to murder a labor leader—an offer which must have made him question the morality of the men who had hired him. After a stint in the Army, spent mainly in Army hospitals, Hammett married Josephine Dolan, a nurse, and returned to detective work in San Francisco. He had to give it up, however, since tailing a suspect for days was the wrong line of work for a man with lungs prone to hemorrhage and an attention-getting cough. Barely supporting himself by writing advertising copy part time, Hammett spent hours in the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library reading nineteenth-century French novelists, thirteenth-century Icelandic sagas (as "laconic and grim" as hard-boiled detective stories, Johnson says) and Henry James. (That Hammett said the plot of *The Maltese Falcon* came in large part from James's *The Wings of the Dove* was news to me, and I was surprised Johnson didn't analyze the similarities between those two very different works.) In the living room of the

Constance Casey, who lives in San Francisco, is the book editor of the San Jose Mercury News.

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E.L. Doctorow on THE BOMB.
Ralph Nader on the POST OFFICE.
Susan Sontag on THE COLD WAR.
Kurt Vonnegut on BEING RADICALIZED.
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apartment he shared with Josephine and their daughter, there was "a bed that folded down and a table that folded out, but not both at once." Exiled from his family when his second daughter was born to keep her safe from tuberculosis, Hammett began to like living apart and was unfaithful to his wife.

After publishing some clever sketches in *Smart Set* ("A man whom I was shadowing went out into the country for a walk one Sunday afternoon and lost his bearings completely. I had to direct him back to the city"), Hammett began to sell detective stories to *Black Mask*. The magazine's editor commissioned the serial that became Hammett's first novel, *Red Harvest*, about warring strikers and scabs in a Western town. "It is not easy to decide to become a writer," Johnson writes. "It is a risky decision by which you almost surely doom yourself to disappointment and failure." Between 1927 and 1930, Hammett wrote three more novels, as well as book reviews, short stories and a novella. Johnson flies over the spectacular success to dwell on the disappointment and failure, which lasted twenty-seven years, until his death in 1961.

The problem that faced Johnson in the last sixteen chapters was, How can one make interesting the decline of a talented man who took his gift and threw it away, primarily by getting drunk? Luckily, Johnson's narrative is unfailingly intelligent and sympathetic. Luckily, too, Hammett lifted himself out of the morass twice—once during his World War II service in the Aleutian Islands and again during the 1950s witch hunt when he served six months in prison for refusing to give a judge the names of those who had posted bail for eleven Communist leaders arrested for un-American activities.

He enlisted readily in the Army; Hammett felt better in male society, Johnson tells us, liking "the situation of solidarity with other men against the lower representatives of higher authority—against the unreasonable sergeant or supervisor, the officious orderly." He found that solidarity among Pinkerton agents, hospital patients, soldiers, even convicts. Running an Army newspaper in the Aleutians, far from civilization and women, Hammett was able to forget about liquor for more than a year.

Basically, Johnson takes her point of view from the women in Hammett's life—his longtime lover, playwright Lillian Hellman, his wife, Josephine, and

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his two daughters, Jo and Mary Jane—which is not surprising, since they're the ones who survived to talk to her. (Hellman agreed to cooperate with Johnson in return for approval of the manuscript and 20 percent of the book's advance and royalties, an arrangement which one hopes will not become standard.) The passages in the book that present Hammett's thoughts are based on his letters to them.

Taking the daughters' point of view leads Johnson at times into a disconcertingly childish style: "Jo, playing in the L.A. street, heard Mary screaming 'Papa's back! Papa's back!' Jo's stomach curled with fear and happiness." Through Jo's memories of a shopping trip, Johnson takes a small swipe at Hellman: "Once he brought his friend Lillian. She was wearing beautiful clothes—she always did—and her bored eyes slid off toward the exit and she snapped at the clerks so that Jo could die of shame."

In Victorian fashion, Hammett separated love and sex; with the women in his life he was, when sober, aloof and taciturn. From Hellman's remembrances we learn that Hammett often went to brothels. (His psychiatrist reported Hammett preferred black or Asian prostitutes.) Johnson surmises that he felt as at home with these "professionals of vice" as he did with the criminals he encountered as a detective and later in prison. A passage that could be Johnson or could be Hammett (the thoughts-from-letters technique can be confusing) elaborates that, unlike respectable women, prostitutes never "reminded you of a sister or a wife or mother, earnest, sweet and bound for disappointment."

In an interview with Johnson, Hellman revealed that one night in the early 1940s, disgusted by Hammett's drunkenness, she said no when he wanted to make love. They never made love again, though he said that sleeping with women besides Hellman was "practically masturbating." Later Hammett was chastely in love with actress Patricia Neal, who appeared in two of Hellman's plays, though Neal considered him far too old, at 56, to consider as a lover. Hammett had violent physical fights with his older daughter, Mary Jane, blackening her eyes more than once. Apparently, he considered her the "bad girl" and his younger daughter, Jo, the "nice girl." With a couple of drinks in him, Hammett could write Jo, "I don't suppose it's been a secret that I've loved you since I first saw you half-an-hour fresh from the womb and looking very much like my father whom I don't love; but now you've grown into the kind of woman I've always hoped you'd grow into—only better, of course." He could also confide in Jo, with offhanded humor, his pain over the long blank hours at the typewriter: "It's swell having a new novel not to do. I was getting pretty bored with just not working on that half a dozen or so old ones."

Johnson reproduces the transcript of Hammett's last public triumph, his 1953 appearance before Senator Joseph McCarthy, who encouraged the State Department's removal of Hammett's novels from American libraries abroad. At the time, President Eisenhower remarked that he wouldn't have removed the books. "The gent at times," Hammett wrote to Jo, "seems to talk a little like Adlai Stevenson."

Though *Dashiell Hammett* is rich in wry observation and ten times better than last spring's *Hammett: A Life at the Edge* by William F. Nolan, or the dull but valuable compendium of facts, *Shadow Man*, by Richard Layman, it contains little delight or hope. It is easy to ask how much delight or hope there could be in a life full of compulsive drinking and screwing, chronic illness and frustrated work. But as Flannery O'Connor said, people without hope don't write novels; the miracle of Hammett's tortured life is that he produced five good novels. The connection between his life and those works remains mysterious.

Perhaps the darkness of Hammett's life dimmed Johnson's characteristic brightness—or perhaps down deep she doesn't like his writing. But I suspect the humor and sharpness and free-ranging speculation that make her essays enjoyable as well as exemplary have been constrained by the looming presence of Hellman, who as Hammett's literary executor seems to have kept a firm hand on the book. Johnson's singular intelligence, though not exactly muzzled, has certainly been muted. □

Hope and Horror in El Salvador

ELIZABETH HANLY

ONE DAY OF LIFE. *By Manlio Argueta. Translated by Bill Brow. Aventura/Vintage. 215 pp. $6.95.*

In *One Day of Life*, Salvadoran novelist Manlio Argueta sets himself an enormous task: to describe the birth of a sense of self-worth in the poorest of his country's poor.

Argueta focuses on a single day in the life of Lupe, a middle-aged peasant woman in Chalate, a dusty farming village a stone's throw from San Salvador. The story is shot through with memories and voices: her own, those of her children, grandchildren and neighbors and those of several local boys, members now of the National Guard. The year must be 1977 or 1978, the period when the Christian Federation of Farmworkers (FECCAS), after making some progress toward land reform, became a prime target of state terrorism.

Elizabeth Hanly has written about Latin America for The Village Voice *and other publications. She is writing a book about the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.*

Argueta crisply depicts Chalate's harrowing poverty. Children die painfully of dehydration, their parents unable to afford the worm medicine that would easily cure them. High interest rates make it impossible for farm workers to borrow enough to buy even a few handfuls of seeds; when they gather, unarmed, in front of a bank to protest, they are slaughtered by the National Guard.

One evening the guards take away Lupe's son, a FECCAS organizer. In the morning his head is atop a fence, his body far away in the hills. "Look how they left all that I had," Lupe's daughter-in-law whispers. The guardsmen come back. This time they bring the broken body of Lupe's husband and hold him half-dead, within her reach. She turns away from him to the guardsmen and denies that she recognizes the man, thus saving herself and her family, at least for now: "At that moment your good eye opened, the one they had left you. . . . Your coffee-colored eyes, the same ones I had seen with my pair for more than thirty years. . . . You were saying, 'Thank you, Lupe.' " She muses afterward, "His companions will go look for him, with the animals in the air as their guide, the buzzards that fly in

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circles, gliding slowly, watching with their all-seeing eyes."

One Day of Life contains as much hope as horror, however, for the people of Chalate are beginning to believe in change. The ability to judge, to question, heretofore buried under homilies to resignation and fear of damnation, is coming to life, and with it a sense of outrage. Thus, the villagers round up some guardsmen and force them to dig a grave for Lupe's decapitated son and then to pray over his body.

There are a number of such stunning scenes scattered throughout, yet the action is usually more fluid than the language in which it is depicted. Voices that are eloquent when describing atrocities can become wooden when discussing FECCAS. Characterizations and relationships are flattened, usurped by FECCAS jargon. The voices of the Guard, by contrast, are always substantial, always believable. With remarkable economy, Argueta traces the steps by which one begins to torture old friends, and these haunting, desperate scenes are among the novel's finest. The Guard aside, we get too few vivid details of daily life in Chalate. A fistful come to mind: a clay whistle for a child's Christmas, the lard soap which Lupe uses to soften her hair. Those few make one hungry for more—hungry to know how life as well as struggle continues in El Salvador.

Those who equate Latin American novels with elastic narration and lush imagery will find work of another order here. This is not a sophisticated novel. Its brilliance is in recording a political moment, and to some extent what that moment meant to one community.

After the murder of San Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980, the large-scale nonviolent protests chronicled in the novel were called off—they were considered suicidal. The novel itself was banned in El Salvador soon after its publication in 1980. FECCAS cannot now be said to exist. Its officers are in exile, as is Argueta, or have joined guerrilla armies, and the hope for peaceful change recorded here seems to have been smashed. Perhaps the real heartbreak of *One Day of Life* lies just beyond it. □

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KAREN ROSENBERG

The Store

For the last twenty-five years Frederick Wiseman has been taking aim at our sacred cows. In the late 1960s, he shook our belief in easy progress with a series of now classic documentaries on educational and social welfare institutions—*Titicut Follies*, *High School*, *Hospital*. In the late 1970s, when most Americans, relieved to be out of Vietnam, were no longer scrutinizing the military, Wiseman was, and in *Canal Zone*, *Sinai Field Mission* and *Manoeuvre* he revealed the "peacekeeping" mentality that has gotten us into Grenada and Lebanon. Now, in the 1980s, he has turned his attention to the high fashion industry, with *Model*, *Seraphita's Diary* (his first fiction film) and, most recently, *The Store*, a study of Neiman-Marcus's main department store and corporate headquarters in Dallas (to air on PBS on December 14). Given his record, he's probably onto our latest weakness.

Conspicuous consumption, like militarism and reformism, has long been with us, but it seems to be having a renaissance today. And as Wiseman meanders up and down glitzy escalators lit up like a Busby Berkeley set, he finds precious few dissenters from Neiman-Marcus's brand of theatrical salesmanship. Customers seem all too willing to accept a sales pitch that they must know is a sales pitch. Even the behind-the-scenes revelations in this film are no revelation at all. A company executive explains to the staff that nothing that takes place in the store is not directed in some way toward making sales. Blunt but not surprising. Wiseman has revealed that we know the rules of this game—and play anyhow.

What customers get, besides flashy merchandise, is attention that is extremely sexual. A woman having her picture taken is told by the female photographer that the photograph would be even better were she wearing no clothes, just her long hair. When a plump lady trying on a voluminous skirt complains of her large hips, the saleswoman compliments her on the pretty face that goes along with them. That these lines *are* lines is underscored by a scene of saleswomen exercising their facial muscles in the morning, so they can smile better all day.

And then there's the sense of participating in high society, high culture: the grand piano and wine at a fashion show say "Europe" to the American West. The careful planning behind such silent messages is conveyed by a board-room statement that the new international breads and pastries section must have no blue roses on the cakes. It shouldn't look like a Jewish deli at 72nd and Broadway, announces the manager, quickly adding that he loves those places. Of course Jewish delis construct their atmosphere just as consciously—Wiseman's film is not an exposé of one exceptionally manipulative corporation but an anthropological study of classy, trendy stores. (Bloomie's and Zabar's would undoubtedly qualify.)

What's most striking about this environment is the lack of differentiation between purchaser and seller—sometimes it's hard to tell who's who in Wiseman's film. Both like being associated with a status institution: one executive notes that guests at a party often think there's something very special about you when you say you work for Neiman-Marcus. Sexual flattery is as important for staff morale as for customer satisfaction. A young man dressed as a chicken reassures a middle-aged employee on her birthday that the best part of her life isn't over, by offering her the grotesque present of a protracted striptease. Even among themselves, the personnel use the language of public relations: a woman from Better Sleepwear tells another department about a "fabric we feel strongly about." Apparently, even the manipulators have been had.

Or have they been? Should we believe that *cinéma vérité* has lived up to its name and delivered truth on a platter? Those of us who have heard arthritic, badly paid salespeople grumble under their breath may suspect that Neiman-Marcus looks like Wonderland only when the camera's rolling. Wiseman has captured the luxurious surface of the store (this is his first documentary in color) but I am not sure he's gone much deeper. His camera finds only employees who identify totally with their company: one executive describes shaming

Karen Rosenberg taught film at Williams College. Her articles and reviews have appeared in The Boston Globe, The San Francisco Review of Books *and* Harvard Magazine.

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the hell out of a friend for buying a fur from another store. Whether this attitude flourishes among the behind-the-scenes workers—the ones who stitch garments, wrap packages and cart merchandise—is never shown. Theft does disturb the happy family atmosphere, and staff members may feel some alienation as their bags are checked upon leaving. Yet in the wintry labor climate of the 1980s they may think twice about expressing such feelings on film.

Another trouble with nonjudgmental, narratorless *cinéma vérité* is that it demands a critical, savvy audience. When Wiseman exposed the military and the social service bureaucracy, he took on systems regarded with popular skepticism, in which few of us participate. But although we buy often and big, we have many defenses against the image of ourselves as crass materialists ("I deserve it," "I really need it") which this film doesn't take on. In fact, by focusing on the rich who shop at a swanky store, Wiseman lets the rest of us off the hook. The customer who wants to replace the lining on her fur coat with the exact same material or nothing at all is a caricature easily dismissed. (Wasn't the prototypical ugly American a Texas oil man or his wife?) To get at middle-class attitudes means finding other symbolic examples. I'd like to see what he'd do with stores for audio components, restaurant-quality housewares or home computers. But that's another documentary. □

FILMS.

KATHA POLLITT

Star 80

I had hopes for *Star 80*, Bob Fosse's film about Dorothy Stratten, the *Playboy* centerfold and movie starlet who was murdered in 1980 by her estranged husband, a low-life hustler named Paul Snider. A friend saw it in a preview and came away raving about Fosse's "feminism": his stern indictment of the soft-core porn biz, his relentless depiction of a naïve teenager's exploitation at the hands of increasingly upscale men—Snider, Hugh Hefner, "Aram Nicholas" (in real life, Peter Bogdanovich, who starred her in *They All Laughed* and was having an affair with her when she was killed).

Well, my friend is out of his mind. *Star 80* is nasty, pretentious and empty. Like Fosse's last movie, *All That Jazz*

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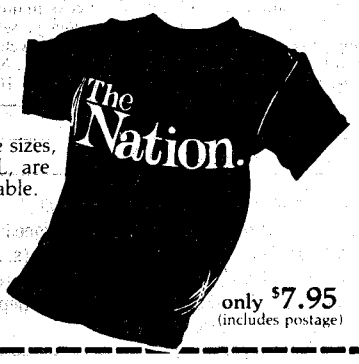

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(which my friend also liked—I should have known), it has a flashy, busy surface. Fosse has dumped a whole bag of cinematic tricks on top of poor Dorothy and her grim and not very complicated story. He scrambles the sequence of time, counterpoints scenes of sleazy sexual marketeering with a voice-over of Dorothy girlishly bubbling on about her good fortune, presents an assortment of witnesses who offer up anecdotes of Dorothy and Paul in response to questions from an off-camera interviewer. He cuts away suddenly to a montage of nude photos of Dorothy, or dissolves to Snider staring at himself in the mirror and ranting that he'll "show them"—"them" being rich sex merchants like Hefner who won't let him in on the action—or Snider spattered with Dorothy's blood and preparing to necrophilize her and kill himself. Fosse keeps flashing back to the murder scene, complete with ominous *Jaws*-like music, and each time he feeds us a new gory tidbit. What on earth for? It matters that Dorothy was killed, but does it matter that her blood got all over the walls? Yet virtually the only suspense the movie offers is the promise of more revolting details about the precise manner of her death. Talk about voyeurism!

Fosse has placed Paul Snider, ex-pimp and organizer of wet T-shirt contests, at the center of *Star 80*—a strange decision. Eric Roberts strains mightily in the part, shouting and sweating profusely, and he certainly looks repulsive with his greasy hair, Valentino mustache and wet pink lips like a pair of mating slugs. But Snider is revealed in his full psychotic awfulness from the start, with that ranting in the mirror business. By the time I'd watched him latch onto Dorothy (whom he "discovers" working in a Dairy Queen in Vancouver), sweet-talk her salty, skeptical mother (played by ex-Baby Doll Carroll Baker, an ironic bit of casting if ever there was one) and furtively stab with a miniature knife a boy who leers at Dorothy at the high school prom, I felt as though I was trapped on the subway with a garrulous madman—simultaneously scared and bored.

The really interesting character should have been Dorothy herself. But as played by Mariel Hemingway she's just a variation on the standard Mariel Hemingway role: vulnerable, sweet and not very bright. She could be Woody Allen's underage girlfriend in *Manhattan* or the coltish college track star in *Personal Best* except that now, thanks to surgical implants, Hemingway has big breasts. According to *People*, they make her feel that she is a woman. God give me strength!

I don't share the suspicion of some reviewers that the real Dorothy could not possibly have been as unconniving as Fosse makes her. Most Playmates may be tough cookies, but that doesn't mean this particular one was. What bothers me is his failure to tell us what is going on in her mind. Ambition? Adolescent rebellion? A desperate need to please? Does Dorothy, like Paul, live in a fantasy built for two? There's one brief moment when it seems like this last is indeed the case. We hear her prattling to a journalist about how Paul and a gorgeous blonde, both in fur coats, walked into the Dairy Queen one day and changed her life, and then we see what really happened: Paul and a peroxided vamp come in out of the rain looking like a pair of wet rats. The suggestion is dropped as soon as it's made. In fact, before too long, Dorothy is telling Nicholas (Roger Rees, in a part so underwritten—out of fear of a libel suit from Bogdanovich?—that it barely exists) that she has always known Paul was sleeping with other women, a bit of worldliness that comes straight out of left field.

But then, Fosse's real interest in Dorothy is not in her character but in her symbolic value as the innocent lamb thrown to the wolves. The wolves are what really excite him. The movie's one idea, if you can call it that, is that Snider and Hefner are brothers under the skin, and there may be people to whom this will come as a surprise, even outside the Playboy mansion. The scenes *chez* Hef are easily the movie's best—Cliff Robertson is knowing and funny as Hefner, bumbling about the mansion in pajamas, half genial blowhard, half pure shark. I suppose it's nice that a mass-market movie comes down hard on *Playboy*—there are sure to be heated post-movie debates among couples about that pile of well-thumbed magazines by his side of the bed—and perhaps it was these scenes that made my friend call *Star 80* feminist.

Fosse's reasons for hating *Playboy* are worlds apart from those of feminists, though. What bothers feminists is its perpetuation of sexist stereotypes and its merchandising of women's bodies to pander to male fantasies of dominance and possession. What bothers Fosse, besides *Playboy*'s pretensions to gentility, is the threat it poses to the

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sexual naïveté of a beautiful girl from the provinces. His ire owes more to the Pope, I fear, than to Gloria Steinem. He has no sympathy at all for the other women—Playmates, auto-show models, bar girls—who fall into Snider's or Hefner's hands—they know what they're doing and for Fosse that makes them as corrupt and evil as the men who buy and sell them. There's even a scene in which middle-aged women scream and cheer at a wet bathing-suit contest for young men—as though the commercialization of sex were a gender-blind phenomenon.

Only Dorothy escapes his wrath. Dorothy may not be a virgin in the physical sense, but she is virginal in her ignorance of the ways of the world, and it is this quality that Fosse celebrates in her. Why is it a virtue, though, for a young girl to be ignorant and provincial and gullible, to believe (if Dorothy means what she says) that *Playboy* layouts are "art" and that pimps and pornographers have her best interests at heart? It is only in women that such qualities are sexually attractive—in men they are merely comical or proof of immaturity. Fosse, lovingly detailing the lack of critical awareness that made Dorothy a passive victim, admires in her exactly what the men who destroyed her did. It would have been a thousand times better for Dorothy if she had been less docile, less eager to please, less dumb. But Fosse would have had no more use for her in that case than Hefner. □

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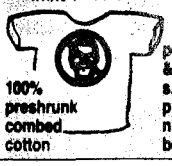

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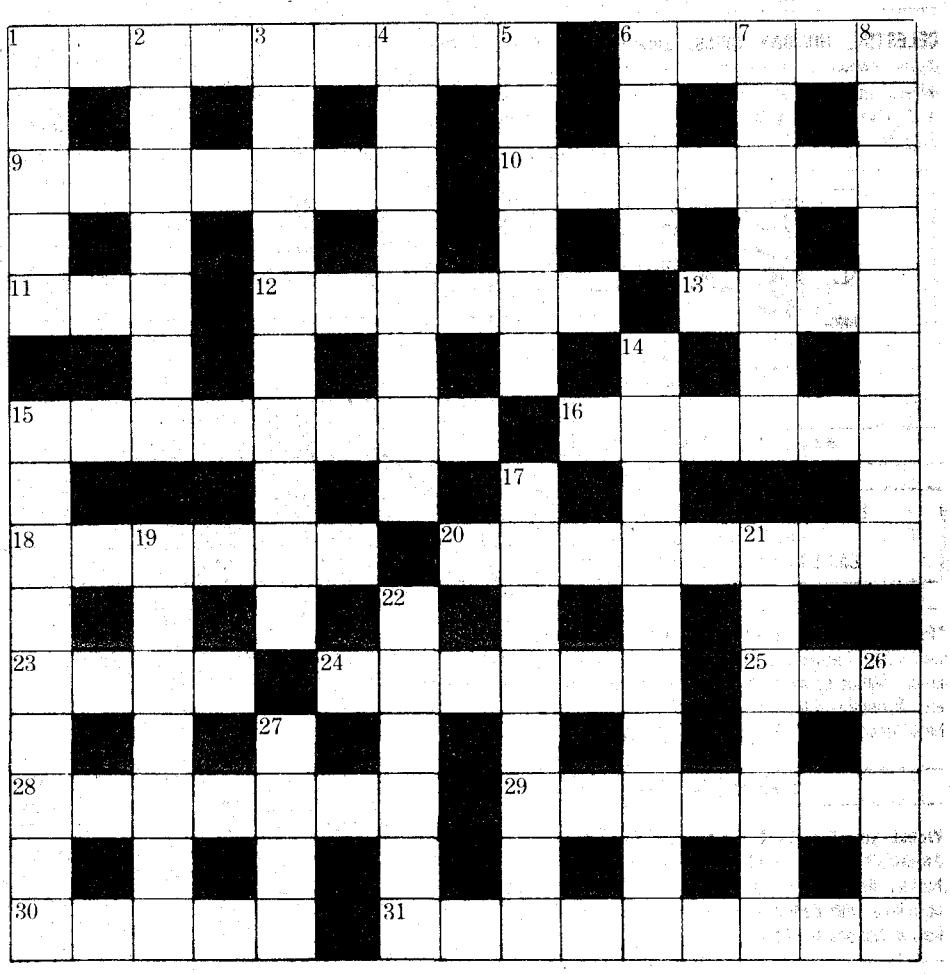

ACROSS

1 Umbrella good for some other time? (4,5)
6 and 13 The nuance of the chief's voice might have grave associations. (9)
9 Were their women simply carried away? (7)
10 A traditional suitor could still be married! (7)
11 City of the Orioles? (One is inside, or coming back.) (3)
12 Sounds somewhat like what one might get from the tower! (6)
13 See 6
15 The plot here might contain a 6-13. (8)
16 Mother's nervous habit might suggest gum as an answer. (6)
18 Things may be held in it, but it's not better to hold a number back. (6)
20 Painter and country prophet. (8)
23 What some did when heads rolled, reputedly. (4)
24 By the sound of it, you might be in New York, for example, to find a model of life. (6)
25 Travel to a spot near Bombay? (3)
28 A sort of fence, or what one might do to the law. (7)
29 and 3 down Basis for a dogfight? (1,4,2,10)
30 Part of the action in the last inning, usually. (5)
31 With gold leaf, I possibly make a few points if it's successful. (5,4)

DOWN

1 One gets up to find the face on the stair. (5)
2 Where crooners found love and Joyce's Molly found a hu band. (2,5)
3 See 29 across
4 Not a good sermon, if it implies a point. (8)
5 Queens are usually superior to them. (6)
6 The one of the Republic follows the battle. (4)
7 How to make wine breathe, as a taking-off place. (7)
8 Stage vehicle from New Orleans? (Want a synonym for its name?) (9)
14 Light growth of pine, possibly. (10)
15 Heads up with this! (Sounds like 1 across swapped ends!) (9)
17 The price of pastry and salt, possibly. (8)
19 Material for a pie? (7)
21 Theotokopoulos, otherwise. (2,5)
22 Is felt, somewhat awkwardly, to be a reflexive form. (6)
26 By the sound of it, refuse to be bad, commonly. (5)
27 Chief, being triumphful, might be near the 12 landmark. (4)

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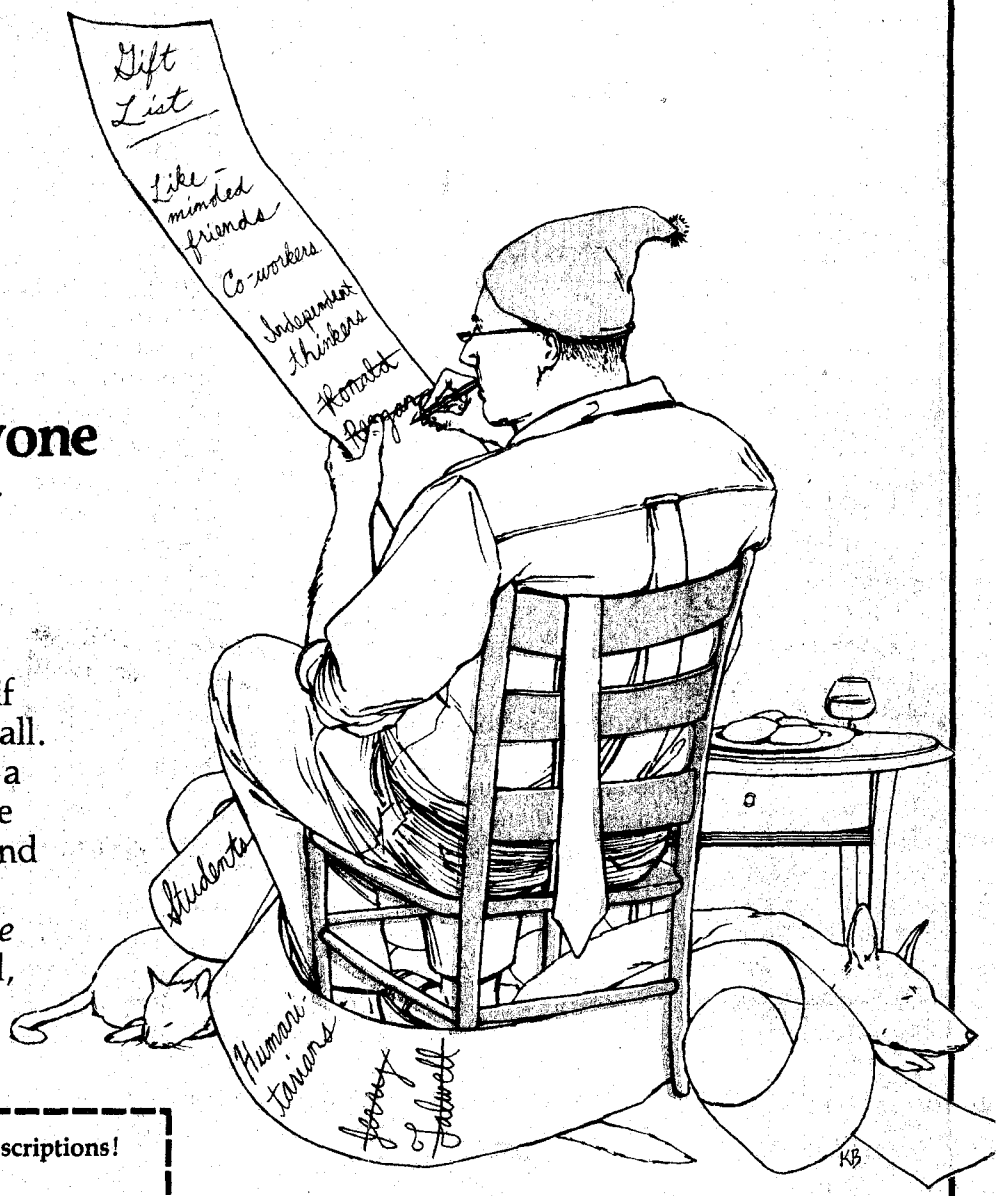

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